



DOCTOR WHO

No.
222

SPARE PARTS



R A HENDERSON

DOCTOR WHO

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R A HENDERSON



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bootleg, you are advised to disregard all of the
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Prologue

It was still light outside, though the floodlamps had dimmed a little to inform the citizens that night was coming on, and as she washed her hands, Sally Philpot thought about the evening ahead. It was Friday, and as was usual for a Friday, she wouldn't be going straight home to tea and a book in bed as she did every other day. Friday night was cinema night, and Eddie was meeting her at the Roxy in the Square. That new sci-fi film was on, and Sally didn't mind that it wasn't a funny or a love story. Science fiction wasn't her cup of tea *per se*, but she always enjoyed herself when she was with Eddie. It was his company. Besides, this was her first opportunity to see the newsreel announcing her brother's promotion to leader of the work crew and applaud it publicly. She scrubbed the last of the beetroot stains off her arms, flushed the sink out with cold water, took off her apron and hung it up with the others. 'That's me done for the day,' she smiled cheerfully.

‘Aye,’ nodded Julie Bannister as she hung her own apron up next to Sally’s. ‘Off home to put me feet up. You too, if you’ve sense.’ Sally giggled. ‘It’s Friday,’ she reminded Julie with a wink. ‘Back row of the Roxy with my darling Eddie on a Friday, Julie love. See you Monday.’ And she virtually danced out of the door.

As was par for the course on Friday nights, the Roxy was busy, and the Square around it. Everyone was bustling about, making the best of what time remained available to them before the nightly curfew. Trams rattled along their lines, halted briefly to let passengers on and off, and then rattled away again. People hurried in and out of shops, costermongers pushed barrows around, yelling what was inside and how much it would cost to buy some. Sally, being only a slight girl, slipped through the crowd with little difficulty and soon found herself outside the front of the Roxy. There was a queue, of course, but Eddie had arrived early and kept her a place. He was almost at the front now, and Sally

trotted up to join him. 'You're late,' Eddie sighed. 'I nearly went in without you.'

'Sorry, Eddie,' Sally answered sheepishly. 'I stopped on the way to do my hair.'

Eddie shook his head, but smiled. 'I dunno,' he chuckled kindly. 'You girls and your hair and makeup.' He reached the front of the queue. 'Two please,' he said to the little fat man in the tiny booth that served as a box office. He took his tickets and paid, then took Sally's hand. 'Let's find a quite little nook at the back, shall we?'

'Ooh, please!' Sally enthused, allowing Eddie to lead her to a reasonably snug spot on the back row. The pair sat down. 'Donny's newsreel's on tonight,' she reminded her boyfriend excitedly. 'I can't wait to see him in his uniform. Mum would be so proud if she could see it.'

Eddie patted her hand. 'Well pipe down then,' he whispered. 'It's starting.'

The lights dimmed so that the square white screen that was the focal point of the cramped auditorium became the brightest thing in it, and a few numbers flickered into view, spasmodically counting down from five.

Music burst from large speakers in brackets near the ceiling, loud, jaunty and uplifting, and on the screen there appeared the title:

THE CENTRAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE
PRESENTS

“MAN’S GREATEST ENDEAVOUR”

A PUBLIC INFORMATION FILM

A man’s voice, cultured, educated and well spoken, in a cheerful and uplifting tone announced, ‘It’s taken six years’ training, but the sky’s the limit today as mankind sets out on its mission to see the stars!’ The screen went black, but that black was spattered with white dots, an artist’s impression of what a starry sky might look like. ‘Crewman Donald Philpot, seen here waving to well-wishers, was chosen from over thirty recruits for the honour of being the first man to set foot on the surface,’ the announcer continued as the artist’s impression was replaced by black-and-white footage of an enormous figure in a complex protective suit and mask waving to a

small crowd of people from the top of a flight of metal steps fixed to a huge steel cylinder with a hatchway in it. The image changed again, the same figure in what looked like a boardroom with a group of important-looking men in suits and one rather young girl wearing little more than a leotard, tights and shoes, with a little too much makeup on and the most fashionable hairstyle money could buy. The announcer said, 'At a special reception, Crewman Philpot was presented to dignitaries from the Central Advisory Committee and even got an extra special farewell from Ruby Craddock, this year's Miss Beetroot Factory.' At this, the tiny dark-haired girl stood on tip-toe and planted the biggest kiss she could manage on the mask just below the Crewman's cheek, leaving a huge lipstick mark that even on the black-and-white film could be clearly picked out by all. The music swelled and the announcer enthused, 'So we say God speed to you as you set out upon Man's Greatest Endeavour!'

Crewman Donald Philpot stepped through a hatchway into a huge metal tube and pulled the hatch closed. The automatic locking system kicked in and the hatch sealed itself. A light came on above Philpot's head and a staccato hum filled the air. Philpot was aware that the platform under his feet, being in fact a lift, was rising, but paid it no great deal of attention. He waited for it to stop. There was a telephone fixed to the wall of the lift and it rang. Philpot picked up the heavy black handset and put it close to his head.

'Good evening, Mr Crewman,' an educated voice said, its tones strangely flat and lacking character. 'I am speaking to you, on behalf of the Central Advisory Committee, in what must be the strangest telephone call ever. In moments, you will step out of your capsule, the first man ever to set foot on the surface since our tiny world began. Strengthened by the finest technologies the science factories can muster, you carry our future in your hands, our light into the endless darkness. Good luck, Crewman. We are praying for you.'

The line went dead.

Philpot put the receiver back into its cradle and turned to face the hatch. A red light changed to green and the Crewman gripped a metal handle and twisted it. The hatch swung open and a savage rush of freezing cold air immediately filled the tube. Philpot was oblivious to it, and he clambered through the hatchway onto the surface of the planet. His eyes took in the scene that lay before him and he could barely believe it. The surface of the planet was desolate, a barren grey wasteland of stone and dust, craters and craggy mountains, and above it the infinity of space loomed, dark though speckled with billions of lights in every conceivable colour. Philpot felt faint, dizzy and nauseous at the same time. Everything was so cold and bleak. His heartbeat and breathing quickened as the realisation hit him – the realisation that his world was certainly doomed. In that moment, he accepted that all hope for his people was lost forever.

And he screamed.

I

Night City

It was Friday night, and as usual the Square was empty. Shops were closed, slatted shutters rolled down over doors and windows, tramlines were lifeless and there was not a barrow-boy to be seen. The floodlamps cast a weak milk-white glow over the streets, and above them, in a shroud of darkness, stretched a dark grey sky of solid rock. Everything was quiet and still, somehow serene and yet somehow haunted. The Doctor didn't like the feeling it was giving him, and he knew that the emptiness was not the sole – or even the principal – cause of his perturbation. He locked the door of the TARDIS against intruders, taking much more care than was usual for him, and turned to face the abandoned streets. It was a square in every sense of the word: four perfectly-straight

roads of equal dimensions juxtaposed at perfect right-angles. In the centre of the square stood a small flat (and also square) traffic island, joined to the pavements surrounding the Square's outsides by narrow pedestrian crossings like zebra crossings on the streets of London, Liverpool or Birmingham. In the centre of the island stood a not-so-square tree, a tall evergreen like a king pine, hung with tinsel and lanterns and boasting a brilliantly shining star at its apex. It reminded the Doctor of the old human tradition of Christmas even though he knew that whatever this tree represented could at best be only a parody of that tradition.

Despite the complete absence of any traffic, he insisted upon taking the zebra crossing first to the island and thence to the far side of the Square at whose corner the TARDIS now stood. There loomed a large building, a little more imposing an edifice than any of the small shops surrounding it. A faded red carpet ran up its steps and a small booth beside the boarded-up doors stood as empty and abandoned as the streets. A legend above the doors read in bold letters 'ROXY

DECAPHONIC” and had probably once been able to light up and look very impressive. It didn’t look very impressive now, though it put the Doctor as much in mind of the traditions of Earth as had the tree. He thought about the amazing similarities between this place and Earth. Even the architecture of the Roxy Decaphonic was similar to the kind of architecture found in cinemas all over Great Britain in the 1950s, and the word ‘Decaphonic’ smacked of the same adaptation from ancient Greek to English that had until now been to the Doctor so individually and singularly human. He was suddenly startled by the voice of a young woman.

‘Battle From Above the Sky,’ she read aloud, her voice carrying a tone of curiosity mixed with bemusement. ‘See visitors from the stars. All action adventure. Astounding. Thrilling. Startling?’ She raised an eyebrow as she turned to face the Doctor.

It was Nyssa, and for a moment the Doctor felt ashamed that in his obsession with this place and its ghosts he had forgotten that she had been quietly walking alongside him all this

time. Nyssa was often quiet, often pensive as the Doctor often was, though her reasons he knew appended to less philosophical attitudes and more personal emotional feelings. She was a scientist, it was true, but for all her power to stick to the clinical and empirical when it was necessary, she still had a heart, and that heart spent some fair run of time in pain which she quietly hid. Sometimes the Doctor thought her selfish to hide it, because sometimes he felt deep concern for her and wasn't allowed to help. It had been, as far as he was concerned, his fault that Nyssa's father had died. Had it not been for his seemingly endless vendetta with the Master, the evil Time Lord mightn't have ever gone to Traken and therefore Nyssa need never have met either of them, nor seen the agony that surrounded their battles. The thought made the Doctor feel all the more melancholy, but he quickly suppressed it as the awareness kicked in that Nyssa was speaking to him. He glanced over the faded poster she'd been examining. It was a brightly-coloured and rather garish print of someone's approximation of a flying saucer smashing its

way down to a city – probably this one – through a stone sky with a powerful beam of heat and people running in all directions, their mouths wide open, screaming. ‘Sunday for Seven Days,’ he read from a poster advertising another film. ‘Sounds suitably tawdry and unrealistic. If we could find an usherette in the gloom, Nyssa, I’d buy you a strawberry Mivvi.’

Nyssa didn’t know what a strawberry Mivvi was, but she decided that she had a very slightly more pertinent question, one relating to the Doctor’s promise to “take her to the pictures” when they had been in the TARDIS on their way here. ‘I thought “the pictures” meant a kind of art gallery.’

‘No,’ smiled the Doctor, amused by her innocence of the human language he’d adapted to so well. ‘But it is an entertainment of sorts.’ He reached over and gripped the iron bar that held fast the boards covering the doorway, rattling them for a second. ‘And this cinema must’ve been shut for years,’ he said exasperatedly.

‘A boarded-up picture house doesn’t prove this is Earth,’ said Nyssa, recalling a slight

disagreement they had had in the TARDIS. A planet on the scanner that the Doctor had said was Earth didn't look like Earth, and he'd said the coordinates were all out, and there was a fierce-looking nebula virtually on the planet's doorstep.

The Doctor had fixed his concentration on the cinema, perhaps deliberately trying to avoid listening to what Nyssa was saying. 'You know,' he muttered, 'I'm not so sure it was a good idea to come here.'

'This isn't Earth, is it Doctor?' Nyssa pressed, refusing to be cowed. He didn't reply so she pressed again. 'Doctor?'

He was looking around. 'Everything shuttered up, not a soul on the streets.'

'Maybe there's a curfew,' suggested Nyssa. 'Or it's just late.'

The Doctor pointed back across the Square in the direction of the TARDIS. On the other side of the road opposite the blue box there stood a building with a small clock tower. The hands on the clock face registered a quarter to eight, and a small inset bore the letters PM. It was just before eight o'clock in the evening. Suddenly the Doctor hooked a finger into his

collar and pulled awkwardly at it. 'It's like a hothouse in here,' he panted, using the word "in" to emphasise his feeling that in spite of the streets and shops they were not by any means outdoors. 'Warm and stuffy.' He looked at Nyssa, taking her stern expression as a sign that his attempts at diverting her were having no effect. 'Oh, it's definitely Earth,' he smiled awkwardly and pointed down a street leading off the Square. 'We're right in the heart of, uh, London! Trafalgar Square is that way, and that's the Palace beyond it.' Then he indicated the tree. 'And look at this. Where else but Earth would you find a Christmas tree?' It was a good thing, he thought, that Nyssa knew too little about Earth's customs to know that Christmas came at winter time, and that if it were Christmas in London it would be freezing cold. 'And tramlines, too,' he said, pointing again. 'It's probably the 1950s.'

But Nyssa wasn't convinced. 'Doctor, even I know that cities on Earth aren't built inside stone caverns, and that Earth is not an isolated grey planet drifting light years from any star.'

The Doctor was quickly realising that he wasn't very good at this. 'The atmosphere's frozen, hence the underground city,' he told her. 'And you must admit it looks like Earth – down here at any rate.'

'This close to the Cherrybowl Nebula?' Nyssa scoffed. 'Far too close, you said.'

'I'm not sure,' said the Doctor dismissively, starting back toward the TARDIS. 'Can we go now?'

Nyssa grabbed his arm to stay him and pulled him back to face her. 'You know where we are, don't you?' she demanded.

The Doctor shook his head. 'Not for certain.'

'But you have a good idea?'

'To be honest, Nyssa, I'd really rather not know. And I know I'll never get another moment's peace if I don't find out, but I'm resigned to that. Quite adamant, actually.' He looked at Nyssa. He wasn't fooling her in the slightest. He sighed. 'Oh, all right. Just another half hour.'

'I didn't say a word!' Nyssa protested.

The Doctor wasn't listening. 'You go that way, I'll go this. But be careful, just look. Don't get involved.'

Nyssa frowned. ‘All right. Half an hour, back at the TARDIS.’ And she turned to walk in the direction the Doctor had suggested to her. As the Doctor crossed the Square, under his breath he muttered, ‘I used to be such a good liar.’

Family Matters

The timber shed was as empty as the streets had been, but that was about to change. The gate was ajar and through the tiny gap a silver object slid, aware that it was being pursued and in search of refuge. It knew there were others hiding nearby and scanned for them.

Suddenly the gate swung wide open and a girl charged in. She was young, perhaps eighteen, with dark hair scraped into a bun and dark almond-shaped eyes set into a heart-shaped face. She wore a hooded top, grey, with a pocket in the front, faded jeans and boots that looked like they were designed for hard graft in harder conditions. The little silver creature darted away from her, charging toward a gap at the bottom of a stack of logs. 'There he goes!' the young girl announced loudly, and had any human being been

present he'd have taken her at once to be a Yorkshirewoman by her accent, though she was truly nothing of the kind. 'Quick, Dad!'

A man drew up to a stop behind her, puffing and panting. He was shorter than her, rotund and red-faced, grey haired and wrinkled. He wore an old beige woolly jumper and thick trousers, boots the same as his daughter and a long black leather cape. In one hand he carried a torch and in the other a brown satchel, which he passed to the girl. 'Crumbs, Vonnie!' the old man panted. 'I'm getting to old for all this.'

Yvonne Hartley pointed to the timber stack under which had vanished the Cybermat and crouched beside it. 'He's under here. I think it might be a Deluxe.'

Her father shuffled into the shed proper and awkwardly got down on all fours to take a peep under the stack. 'Oh yes,' he nodded, recognising the type instantly. 'Deluxe Mark VI. Thinks he's safe holed up in there.'

Yvonne hastily unpacked the satchel. She handed her father a small gadget with a handle at one end and prongs at the other, like a large tuning fork only with a kind of electronic box

in the middle into which was set a single knob with eight settings. 'Here's the Cheeser.'

Hartley took the Cheeser by the handle and checked that the knob was set to the "off" position. 'Right,' he said decisively. 'Let's sort you out, you little silver vermin.' He clicked the knob onto the first setting and jabbed the fork into the hole.

'Hurry up, Dad,' Yvonne hissed urgently as the Cheeser warmed up. 'It's almost lights-out. The last tram's gone already.'

'Not to worry,' Hartley said dismissively. 'Patrols won't be out for ages yet.' The Cheeser started to hum. 'There now. He can't resist that. I'll give him three minutes.' He smiled at his daughter. 'And then we can be off home to tea. Got the net?'

Yvonne took a small net of wire mesh out of the bag and passed it to him, along with a pair of metal tongs. She looked down at the hole in the timber stack. 'He's not budging.'

'Give him time,' Hartley said confidently. They were both disturbed suddenly by a kind of electronic squeak. 'What was that?' Yvonne yelped.

Hartley turned to look behind them. Another Cybermat was approaching them from the far side of the shed. 'Another one!' he exclaimed in surprise.

'You don't think it's a nest, do you?' Yvonne inferred, not entirely sure what purpose a nest would serve to creatures that don't reproduce naturally.

But her father was too interested in what was going on between the two Cybermats. The one that had been behind them was making squeaking noises, and the one under the timber stack, struggling to resist the allure of the electronic rat-trap set for it, was squeaking back. 'The crafty beggars are ganging up on us!' Hartley gasped, scrabbling to get to his feet. At that moment the Cybermat that had been behind them whizzed between his legs, charging the timber stack head-on. The stack collapsed, logs rolling in every direction, one hitting Hartley full in the stomach and sending him crashing onto the wooden floor. The log rolled onto his chest and stopped, laying across him there and pinning him to the floorboards. Hartley was silent, inert.

Yvonne had already backed away. She was standing by the planked wall, clear of the disaster area. The Cybermats had scattered, their trap sprung and therefore their work done to their satisfaction. Yvonne had seen them both scoot out of the gate into the street. Quickly she rushed to her father's side, crouching beside him and gripping the heavy log that held him down. 'It's all right, Dad,' she promised, though her tone lacked even the faintest degree of confidence. 'I'll move this stuff.' She tried to heave the timber up, but she just didn't have the strength. After several heaves, she gave up, realising that there was only one other course of action. At this hour there would be no citizens on the streets, but perhaps she could find a policeman. They gave her the creeps and they would probably punish her and her father for being out so late, but a policeman would certainly be strong enough to lift the log up and pull Hartley out. 'I'll go and get help,' Yvonne wheezed, too panicked to even be aware of whether or not her father was conscious, and she ran outside, calling for help as loudly as she could.

Nyssa heard the voice calling desperately from up the street ahead of her. A young woman, or perhaps just a girl, shouting for help, almost crying. Quickly she jogged up in the direction of the call, to what looked like a large shed or barn laying back a little off the road. There was a girl outside, brown-haired and button-nosed, a little younger than Nyssa, wearing scruffy clothes that looked like they were for working in and waving her hands high in the air. 'What's the matter?' asked Nyssa as she reached the girl.

'Quick,' the girl said urgently. 'It's my dad. In here.' She grabbed Nyssa's hand and pulled her into the barn. It was a mess, logs strewn everywhere, and a man was lying on the floor with a log right across his chest, apparently unconscious and trapped. 'I can't lift it on my own,' said the girl, and she was worried that Nyssa didn't look strong enough either. She started to cough.

'Are you all right?' asked Nyssa, worriedly.

'I just need my pills, that's all,' said the girl, reaching into the pocket of her sweater and taking out a small pill bottle. She twisted the cap, spilled two pink pills into her hand and

swallowed them. Her cough subsided. 'There. I'm fine. Now please, my dad.'

Nyssa nodded and looked down at the stricken man on the floor. 'We'll need something to lever the wood up with,' she said, looking around the barn. 'That'll be easier than trying to lift it.' She spotted a row of hooks on the back wall from which hung various tools on leather thongs. One of them was a crowbar. 'That metal rod, the black one. Can you get it?'

Yvonne gingerly picked her way through the mess of logs and reached the crowbar down from its hook. 'Be careful,' she begged as she passed it to Nyssa. 'It doesn't look safe.'

Nyssa stabbed the end of the crowbar between a crack in the floorboards and braced its body against the end of the log, leaning on the other end. 'I should be able to lever this up,' she told Yvonne. 'When it lifts, pull him clear as quick as you can. I won't be able to hold it for long.'

Yvonne nodded and scurried to her dad's feet, ready to grab them at a second's notice. She watched Nyssa, barely older than her and certainly healthier, push down hard on the

crowbar. Nyssa grunted and groaned as she heaved, and then Yvonne noticed a shift in the log. 'It's going!' she shouted excitedly, grabbing her father's ankles. Another heave from Nyssa left nearly an inch between man and log, and Yvonne hurriedly whisked him out, leaving Nyssa to let the timber drop onto the floor with a thud. 'Thank you,' Yvonne gushed. 'Are you all right?'

Nyssa was catching her breath and coughing up the unsettled dust of the barn. 'I'm fine, really,' she promised. 'What about your father?'

Yvonne looked down with concern. 'I don't know. He's not moving.'

Nyssa crouched beside him and touched his chest. There was a bulky object under his sweater so she put a hand over his mouth instead. 'He's not breathing,' she told Yvonne as she moved to pick up his wrist.

'What are you doing?' gasped Yvonne, seeming confused and disturbed by Nyssa's behaviour.

'I can't find his pulse,' Nyssa said.

‘I don’t understand,’ Yvonne murmured, and there was something in her tone that suggested she really didn’t.

Nyssa looked up at her with sad eyes. She knew what it was like to lose a father. ‘Look,’ she started in a gentle voice, struggling to find a way to tell the girl. ‘I’m sorry. I don’t even know your name, but your father, well, I think he might be...’

‘Her name’s Yvonne, lass,’ said Hartley suddenly, making Nyssa jump. ‘Gave us all a fright, that did! I’m a bit dusty, but all in one piece.’

‘Dad!’ squeaked Yvonne, hugging him tightly. ‘You sure you’re all right?’

He looked down at his left arm, which seemed a little limp. ‘Well my arm’s a bit...’ He smiled. ‘No. I’m fine. Who’s your friend?’

‘My name’s Nyssa,’ Nyssa said.

Hartley shrugged. ‘Unusual name. Well, we’re obliged to you Nyssa.’ He looked her up and down. Her wine-coloured velvet jacket and trousers were covered in dust and wood shavings. ‘We’d best get you cleaned up.’

Nyssa shook her head, remembering the Doctor's warning about getting involved. 'I'm fine, really,' she said.

'Well, you can't have far to go,' Hartley smiled. 'Not so close to lights-out.'

'I'm not actually from around here,' said Nyssa, not realising that she was dropping herself in at the deep end.

A klaxon sounded and suddenly the whole barn was in darkness, save for Dad Hartley's torch, lying on the floor, still switched on. He picked it up and passed it to Yvonne, who was aware that she would need it to find the Cybermat-trapping equipment before leaving the shed. 'Lights-out,' Yvonne said. 'You'll never get home now.'

Nyssa made for the gate. 'I can look after myself,' she said, staring into the opaque blackness that occupied the city now that the floodlamps had been deactivated.

'With night patrols out?' scoffed Hartley. 'I reckon you'd best come back with us. It's the least we can do.'

'I have to meet someone,' Nyssa protested.

'No one's out at this hour,' argued Yvonne.

‘Only bloodmarket spivs and civil servants,’ agreed her father.

‘And the police,’ Yvonne added, spitting the word “police” out as if it were dirty and making Nyssa wonder if the pair might be criminals. After all, what were they doing in this barn before the accident?

Nyssa was about to open her mouth to protest further, but Dad Hartley held up a staying hand. ‘Now then, no arguing young lady. It’s back home, quick as you like.’ And with a grin he added, ‘And we’ll see what’s set for tea.’

Doctors and Nurses

The lights had gone out all over the city, and everything was in pitch darkness. The Doctor had managed to find in his voluminous pockets a small hand-torch. Its light was weak but at least he could see where he was going. It was at times like this, for small reasons, that he most missed his sonic screwdriver. He recalled that there was a small torchlight in the handle, more powerful than the little battery operated thing he now carried. He resolved to make another just as soon as he had time, whenever that might be. Unable to see much of the street, he chose his path partially by instinct and partially at random. Coming to a halt in the middle of nothing, he waved the torch around and found that he had come to a T-junction in the road. 'The Empress of China once had a night fright,' he recited

quietly, waving the torch left and right and back again. 'She couldn't remember her left from her right.' He panned the torch right and the pale yellow glow fell on a slender post with a request sign at the top. It was a tram stop, and that was of no interest to the Doctor at all, and so he panned to the left instead. The light of the torch picked out a small row of shops on the other side of the road, and the Doctor looked both ways, still failing to observe the fact that there was absolutely no traffic, and crossed. He shone the torch into some of the shop windows, but they were all in darkness, lifeless and unoccupied. He was about to walk away when he noticed another faint glow in his periphery. To be sure it wasn't a reflection of his own light in a window, he switched his torch off. The light was still there and he approached it slowly. It was coming from the window of what appeared to be the last shop on the row, dim and greenish, by the look of it the only sign of civilisation for miles around. The Doctor peered into the window and saw an old man hunched over a desk, looking through a sheaf of papers by the light of a

phosphor lamp. The man was grubby and unkempt, with narrow features, a sallow complexion and a head that was bald at the top but sprouted long grey wisps downwards from the crown. His clothes were shabby and grubby from what the Doctor could see: a tattered waistcoat worn open and ragged shirt. For a moment the Doctor regarded him with curiosity, and then decided he'd be as good a person to question as any. He pushed the door and a welcome bell tinkled pleasantly as he passed through.

'We're closed,' the old man said quietly but gruffly.

'Oh, I'm sorry,' the Doctor smiled disarmingly. 'Just exploring.'

'Well you won't catch a tram and go exploring from round here at this hour,' the old man replied bluntly. 'There's no more trams till the morning.' His voice was rough and gravelly, and unlike most in the city he didn't have a Northern accent, though of course as this was the first native with whom he'd had contact the Doctor was unaware of the pertinence of that. Any human visitor might have called the man in the shop a

Londoner. Perhaps even a Cockney. But like the rest of the citizens, he was anything but English.

The Doctor countered the old man's dismissive comment by dismissing it. 'I don't think I've actually ever travelled on a tram,' he thought aloud. Then he offered a hand to shake. 'I'm the Doctor,' he smiled. The hand was ignored and so he withdrew it. 'How far does the city reach?'

The old man was ignoring his questions. 'A doctor, eh?' he grinned to show three gaps where missing teeth should be. 'Public or private?'

'That's between me and my clients,' the Doctor deferred.

'Private then,' the old man smirked as if he had beaten the clever Doctor at a hand of cribbage. 'We've got a lot of doctors round here already. Where's your identity papers?'

'Sorry,' the Doctor smiled breezily. 'Must've mislaid them.'

'Or your ration book?' the old man pressed him. 'You got any family?'

'Mislaid them too, I'm afraid. Careless of me, I know.'

The old man started to chuckle hoarsely as if something had amused him, but under the laughter lay something sinister, barely perceptible but present. ‘Doctorman,’ he laughed. ‘I like it.’ He was eyeing the Doctor, looking him up and down. ‘Clothes, teeth, hair, eyes, all very nice. Very healthy. All your own, are they?’

‘Just something I go about in,’ the Doctor answered flippantly.

‘Outside and in?’

‘Down to the last ligament. It’s funny; I heard that artificial organs are all the rage these days.’

The old man didn’t like that. ‘New-fangled Committee gadgetry,’ he spat.

‘Committee?’ asked the Doctor, not sure he understood the value of such a word in a place like this. ‘So there’s no more demand for good old-fashioned natural transplants?’

‘Oh, you should see my waiting list, Doctor!’ the old man cackled. Then he sucked in a deep breath through his nose and looked seriously up at his visitor. ‘You ever thought of a new career as a donor?’ He said the word “donor” with the slightest hint of excitement,

which the Doctor found slightly menacing. 'It can be *very* lucrative.'

The Doctor was looking around. He'd become aware as the old man was laughing and talking that in the gloom of the lamp there had been revealed shelves behind the desk, many of them laden with jars containing pickled human organs of various kinds. 'Is this your shop?' he asked sharply. Then he noticed a legend on the desk and read it aloud to himself: 'Thomas Dodd. Purveyor and Fitter of Necessary Bodily Parts. Discounts Negotiable.' Another similarity with Earth lay it seemed in names, the Doctor observed, and another in people who made their fortunes from others' misfortunes in a sordid and macabre fashion. 'Perhaps I should take a look.'

'Are you a health inspector?' Dodd demanded. 'You're certainly not the police.' It seemed that was something of which he was totally sure, and the Doctor wondered if the police here had no plain clothes division. The Doctor leaned by pressing his hands on the desk and looked seriously into Dodd's sunken

eyes. 'Tell me, Mr Dodd,' he said quietly. 'Tell me about the city.'

Dodd cackled again. 'Listen, Doctor. How about a glass or three, and we can have a little chat? Just us.'

'We're home, lad!' Dad Hartley called down the short hallway as he closed the front door. He waved in the direction of the door nearest the front. 'In you go, you two,' he said to Yvonne and Nyssa, who shuffled through to the living room. 'Let's see what our Frank's got for tea.'

'Thank you,' said Nyssa from the living room doorway, 'but I really shouldn't...'

He dismissed her protest yet again, as he had been doing all the way home. 'Oh nonsense,' he sniffed. 'Now you get in while I lock up.'

Yvonne beckoned from inside the living room proper. 'In here, Nyssa.'

Nyssa turned and looked around the room. The walls were papered attractively in a pattern of pale blue and white and the skirtings were painted a darker blue. There was a wide window at the far end of the room

hung with dark green curtains, which were closed, and there was a dark green three-piece suite of a sofa and two armchairs, a dark brown coffee table and a cream rug. The floor was carpeted dark red with a pattern of gold, blue, white and green. It was the kind of motley arrangement collected by families who couldn't afford to be any more selective about their household decor. In the corner beside the window there stood a squat, boxy television set, and running along the opposite wall there was a sideboard with a telephone that looked like it had seen better days and an old and rather clunky radio. The wall left-juxtaposed with the window had a mantelpiece, but it surrounded an electric heater rather than a proper fire, and on the mantelpiece there were a few ornaments. Above it hung a picture in a frame designed to look like gold but obviously plastic. The printed reproduction of a painting depicted trees and flowers in a meadow with a small brook running through. In another corner there was a birdcage on a stand with an exotic-looking bird in it that twittered intermittently. Nyssa wondered where she

should sit and waited to be offered a seat while Yvonne made for another door, obviously the way to the kitchen. Yvonne was cheerfully calling, 'Frank, we've got a visitor!' But her enthusiasm evanesced as a scrawny old woman in an old-fashioned nurse's uniform appeared in the kitchen doorway. She had white hair, a long face, a stern expression and horn-rimmed spectacles. 'Good evening, Yvonne,' she said.

Yvonne half-smiled, and it was clear that she did not care for this old bird in the slightest. 'Evening, Sisterman Constant,' she said curtly.

'The Sisterman's been waiting for hours,' a grumpy voice said from the kitchen. 'Where have you been?'

'Don't exaggerate, Frank,' Constant said in a mildly stern tone. 'I've been waiting fifty-six minutes.'

Frank Hartley stuck his head out of the kitchen door. In his hands he held a plate and a tea-towel. His face was narrow too, as seemed common here, and like everyone but Dad Hartley he was obviously thin and undernourished. He had short and slightly

wavy black hair, dark eyes and a wide mouth. He nodded to Nyssa. 'Who's that?'

'My name's Nyssa,' came the polite reply to Frank's question. 'Good evening.'

Dad Hartley emerged from the hall, cape off and hung up, the squarish lump under his jumper now uncomfortably obvious. 'Nyssa missed her last tram home,' he explained. 'We couldn't leave her out on the streets.' He nodded to the nurse. 'You're out late, Sister.'

'Just doing my rounds,' Constant answered with cheerfulness that was evidently fake. Nyssa observed that she didn't have the same accent as the others. The Sisterman sounded more like one of the elder folk of Traken, cultured and educated. She looked pointedly at Nyssa. 'Do I know you, dear?' The question sounded in its tone more like a demand to identify herself than a polite enquiry.

'I don't think so,' Nyssa replied, quickly understanding why Yvonne seemed so dispassionate about the old woman.

Quickly, Dad Hartley whistled up a cover story. He had in the short time he had known her taken to Nyssa and he knew that it would be an ill fate indeed for her to be dragged off

by the Sisterman. ‘Nyssa’s down from the South District,’ he said to the Sisterman. ‘Not under your jurisprudence up there, is she?’

‘Unfortunately not,’ huffed Constant. She turned her attention to Yvonne. ‘And how are you? Still employed at the hydroponic culture plant?’

‘Yes, thank you Sister,’ nodded Yvonne with another forced smile.

‘And is the medication working?’

‘Yes thanks.’

‘No side-effects?’

‘Nope. Not much.’

Frank snorted from the kitchen doorway, in which he was now leaning. ‘Apart from being dad’s favourite.’

Hartley waved a finger at him. ‘Now now, Frank.’

Constant paid the tiny fracas no attention. She instead turned to Dad Hartley. ‘And how are you now since the cardioectomy?’

‘Oh, normal, mostly,’ Hartley answered cheerfully. ‘Sometimes I can feel the little paddles going round inside the chest unit.’

‘That’s normal,’ said Constant.

‘It’s like being wired up to an accordion,’ chuckled Hartley. ‘I’ll give you a tune if you like.’

But Constant ignored the joke. She had noticed something else. ‘You seem to be holding your arm awkwardly.’ Nyssa noticed for the first time that he was cradling the limb protectively, though the term “chest unit” and the implications of the word “cardioectomy” were at the centre of her mind at that point, disturbing her thoughts.

‘Just pulled it a bit,’ Hartley told the Sisterman dismissively. ‘Nothing serious.’

Yvonne jumped in, concerned for him. ‘Dad! You didn’t say,’ she chided.

‘Perhaps we should have a look,’ suggested Constant.

Hartley shook his head. ‘No. I know what that means.’ It was clear he didn’t like the idea. ‘My arm’s fine, and I neither want nor can afford a new one.’

Constant shrugged. ‘As you like.’ She had decided now to concentrate on the newcomer. ‘And you, my dear,’ she said in a vain attempt to be disarming. ‘Nyssa... what, exactly?’

Nyssa had abandoned her original family name after her homeworld had been destroyed. She was the last of the Trakens, and she kept the name of her people as a surname now, a constant reminder that the Traken people could never truly be dead as long as she, or some part of her, survived and endured. 'Nyssa of Traken,' she answered.

'O'Traken,' Constant mispronounced deliberately, daring to imagine it might be similar to certain other family names borne by families that no longer existed. 'There's an O'Brien family in the West District, I think. May I see your papers?'

Nyssa stood firm. 'In the South, where I come from, we accept people on trust. Mr Hartley has kindly extended his hospitality to me, but I don't answer to strangers.' She gave Constant a sharp look. 'Especially not nosey, busybodying public servants.'

Constant bristled. 'I see,' she huffed. 'Well, if you'll excuse me,' she added haughtily, 'I must be going.'

Dad Hartley quickly suppressed his smile at Nyssa's response. 'Um, oh dear!' he said to the Sisterman as if he was upset that she was

leaving. 'I'll see you out!' and he ushered her to the front door.

Frank darted from the other door to the kitchen into the hallway to meet her. 'Sister,' he asked. 'Any chance of a call-up?'

Hartley groaned. 'Oh no, Frank. Not this again.'

'You're a bit young for that, aren't you?' Constant answered patronisingly, as if she were talking to a ten year-old. 'We'll have to see.' And as Hartley opened the front door for her she gave her usual departing crow of, 'Heaven Bless you all!'

As the front door closed, Yvonne finally stopped holding it in and burst out laughing. 'Oh, Nyssa!' she almost wept, hugging her new friend. 'That was brilliant! That sorted the old boot out! Wasn't that brilliant, Frank?'

Frank was back in the kitchen by now and the only reply he gave was a grunt.

'Surely if she can go, I can' inferred Nyssa. Yvonne stopped laughing. 'It's not safe,' she insisted. 'Dad!' she called. 'Tell her she can't go.'

'But my friend...' Nyssa protested.

Hartley emerged from the hall again, calling to Frank to put the kettle on. 'By 'eck, Nyssa,' he chuckled. 'I wouldn't want to go a couple of rounds with you. But Vonnie's right. You're better off here.'

'I hope I wasn't too rude,' Nyssa said thoughtfully.

'To the Sisterman?' Hartley grinned. 'No. There's not much courtesy behind her curtains, as me dad used to say. As for your friend, he'll just have to look after himself.'

O'Traken. There was definitely something funny about that. Sisterman Constant knew the names of all the families still alive, knew every member by first name, knew there was no one still alive in the South District. She couldn't tell anybody that, of course, due to the Committee State Secrets Act, and for the same reason she could not out Nyssa as an impostor in front of the Hartleys. But more than that, she wanted to know who this girl really was and what she was doing in that apartment. Also, she had found amongst the Hartleys a suitable specimen for call-up to the

surface crews and needed to call it in, give the selectee's address and family identification number. All in all, there was a lot to call in. Switching on the powerful torch issued to her by her employers, Sisterman Constant stepped off the Hartley's doorstep and headed in the direction of the nearest pay telephone.

Half and Half

‘So,’ said Thomas Dodd. ‘Yes or no?’

The Doctor was examining a jar that had what looked like a gallbladder suspended in preserving fluid inside. He was disgusted by the sight. He glanced back in the direction of Dodd. ‘To what?’

‘A drink,’ groaned Dodd. He was holding up a dark green bottle that looked almost black in the creepy light and had two scuffed and soiled-looking glasses on the desk in front of him.

‘No, thank you,’ the Doctor answered.

‘Best not hang about then,’ Dodd said. ‘Curfew. Police will be round soon. They don’t like people being out after dark.’

‘Mr Dodd,’ the Doctor persisted, refusing to let go. ‘What *is* the population of the city these days?’

‘Down to a few thousand,’ Dodd shrugged, his face a puzzled expression because as far as he was aware everyone knew that.

‘And this is the last inhabited city on...’ the Doctor almost didn’t dare say it. ‘...Mondas?’

‘Course it is,’ Dodd scoffed. ‘Where you been?’

The Doctor looked troubled. ‘Well, that’s one question answered. No wonder business is bad. You’re nearly extinct.’ He made for the door.

‘Oi!’ Dodd called after him, scrambling from behind the desk. ‘Where d’you think you’re going?’ He caught up to the Doctor on the pavement outside, where the Doctor had switched on a small torch. ‘You’re not an escaped cryogenics experiment, are you?’ Dodd asked the Time Lord. ‘Because you can’t refreeze once you’re thawed out, you know!’

‘Sorry,’ the Doctor answered, marching off toward the junction. ‘I’m supposed to be meeting a friend, and I’m late already.’ He

moved to cross the road, this time not looking both ways. It was strange that at the one time he accepted that there should be no traffic there was some.

‘Stop!’ the driver ordered.

The Doctor turned to face the vehicle. It was a horse – or rather it ought to have been a horse. It was exactly the right size and shape to be a horse, but it wore a mask that looked like it might be made of a leathery substance with large meshed-over holes for eyes and a covering over the nose and mouth, like a cross between an extended nosebag and a horse-sized gasmask. There was a huge brace around its neck made of solid shining metal from which the reins projected, and its shoulders and thighs had been replaced by mechanised screw joints with a kind of piston emplacement welded to the very bone through the horse’s hair and flesh. The rider of the horse was as much a man as the horse was a horse. He was shaven-headed and his skin looked like it might not have waited for him to die before starting to decompose. He too had a brace around his neck and this one was inset with a kind of speaker apparatus

that ran down to a boxy device sunk into his chest, probably welded to his ribcage like the pistons to the horse's thighs. He wore a long black leather cape and carried a whip on his belt. His arms and legs were sheathed in a plasticky material that was semi-transparent, revealing to the close examiner small wires penetrating the skin, and there were metal ring clamps like flanges at his elbow, wrist, knee and ankle joints as if his limbs had been at some time or other chopped up and then bolted back together. He wore boots but his hands were bare and recognisably human. The Doctor found the sight sickening, but then he of course knew what it almost was. 'Committee Police?' he asked Thomas Dodd.

'I told you they'd be here,' Dodd answered by way of confirmation. He looked up at the policeman. 'Good evening, Constable,' he said slowly, as if he were talking to someone with severe comprehension problems.

'Identify yourself,' the policeman said to the Doctor, ignoring Dodd. 'Civilian movement is forbidden during hours of curfew.' One odd thing the Doctor instantly noticed was that the policeman's mouth did not actually form

the words. The mouth opened and stayed fixed open until the words stopped coming from the speaker, then closed. Another thing the Doctor noticed was that there was an erratic pitch variation as the policeman spoke, but that the same variation was the only characteristic of what was otherwise the soulless buzz of a machine. It was similar to a voice the Doctor had heard before, a voice generated by a device cabled up directly through the throat to human vocal folds.

‘He says he’s a doctorman,’ intoned Dodd, trying to mimic the policeman’s dead voice. The Doctor jerked a thumb at Dodd. ‘And this one says he’s a paragon of virtue, but I wouldn’t believe either of us!’ He didn’t want to give anything away to this creature. Who knew what interest it might have in an unidentified scientist?

‘These streets are sealed,’ the policeman buzzed. ‘Present your identification papers.’

‘I don’t have an identity,’ the Doctor informed the horseman. ‘At least not as far as you’re concerned.’

‘Don’t antagonise him!’ Dodd whined worriedly, and the Doctor could see how

scared he was of the mounted figure. He didn't blame him, and with good reason.

'I doubt he has the knack to get even slightly disgruntled,' the Doctor retorted, delving into his pocket and pulling out a Chinese firework and a box of *England's Glory* matches.

Dodd gawked. 'What are you doing?' he screeched.

'Do not move,' ordered the policeman. 'Give your name and district.'

'Just a small diversion,' the Doctor answered Dodd's question as he fumbled to light a match.

'Defiance is unacceptable,' said the policeman without any hint of menace, though the Doctor knew it had plenty of that particular commodity. 'Surrender now.'

'Whatever happened to "resistance is useless"?' the Doctor gibed as he finally got a match to light and put it to the firework's touch paper.

The policeman pulled the whip off his belt. The stranger had been given his chance and had wasted it. He lashed out at the Doctor, whose wrist caught the tip of the stroke as he threw the firework into the air a few feet

above the horse's head. The Doctor cried out in pain, but his diversion had worked. The firework exploded spectacularly a couple of feet from the policeman's face, causing him to reel and fall off the horse, crashing onto the road beside it. The Doctor looked at Dodd. 'Run!' he shouted, and they both fled.

Unable to leave his post on account of his orders, the policeman gathered himself up, unclipped the radio set from his chest unit and called the incident in.

At the Hartley house, the tea was finished and Nyssa was clearing the table. Dad Hartley had tried to persuade Frank to help out with the tidying up, but he had insisted upon doing his homework, and that had been good enough reason for him to avoid the household chores at least for a time. Nyssa had asked him what he was studying. Logic and cybernetics had been his answer. She hadn't liked the sound of that. Already she'd observed a few things around this place that put the most unpleasant thoughts into her head. She herself had specialised in cybernetics as well as

biochemistry at school, and she knew how control and communication in amalgamated biological and technological parts operated. Also, from past personal experience, she knew what the *abuse* of cybernetics could lead to, and she'd seen plenty of evidence so far of it being abused. A boy studying cybernetics and the use of logic was at least as bad as a man with no heart who can hear the paddles turning in his chest unit. Nyssa finished clearing the table and put the things in the kitchen sink as Yvonne had told her was the norm. 'Thank you for the meal, Mr Hartley,' she said kindly. 'But I still think I should leave.'

Hartley shook his head. 'Now, we've told you it's not safe. Any road, we couldn't turn you out so close to the Holiday. We'll see you get an early tram.'

'But it's not really like that,' sighed Nyssa. She'd have said more, but she was distracted by Yvonne whistling loudly and turned to see what she was doing. Yvonne was bent at the birdcage, whistling to the purple, yellow and green feathered creature inside. 'Trillerby's still not singing properly,' Yvonne said sadly

as she looked at the bird. He used to pick up songs dead easy.'

'Stupid bird,' Frank muttered, not looking up from the homework books on his lap in the armchair nearest the television.

'What sort of bird is he?' asked Nyssa.

'Trillerby Mark II,' Yvonne told her. 'But he's a bit worn out.'

Nyssa chuckled with slight embarrassment at the revelation that the bird was a machine. It was obviously a sort of novelty, or perhaps a toy for children. 'Oh!' she smiled. 'I thought he was real!'

'He is real,' Yvonne said, sounding affronted by any suggestion to the contrary. 'Half and half. Just a bit rusty, that's all.'

'Yes, of course,' Nyssa said quietly, observing another example of cybernetic abuse. This time, though, not just the abuse of a science, but the abuse of an animal. Obviously this civilisation was one of the large number in the universe that tested scientific processes on lesser species before allowing their own people to try them. In this case, scientists had experimented on birds and then, both as a means of testing the public

reaction to the new developments and disposing of animals that were no longer usable, had marketed them to the general public as diverting amusements. This would also probably have helped raise money for the furthering of the project. Nyssa felt sick, but she wasn't stupid, and by now she had worked out for herself the horrible truth about this place and its people. She had happened to mention to Frank when he'd told her what subjects he was studying that she was a scientist herself, and Dad Hartley had overheard and asked her to have a look at his chest unit. He had pulled up his jumper and she had examined it and made some slight repairs with a screwdriver handed to her by Yvonne from a drawer in the sideboard. The way it was rigged reminded her very distinctly of something she had once helped the Doctor to dispose of from the TARDIS. Something that was dead, and ostensibly had even been dead when it had been walking around and killing people. During the course of Nyssa's examinations she had been interrupted by a woman banging on the front door and crying for help. She felt deeply disturbed when the

Hartleys ignored the panicked and desperate sounding neighbour, Dad saying that it was her own fault for being out after dark and getting Frank to turn on the television so that they could feign not hearing her.

The television was still on now, and Dad Hartley, feeling much better after Nyssa's adjustments, asked Frank to switch it off. Nyssa went to the window and lifted the curtain to see if there was any sign of the woman. The window was boarded up on the outside, and this puzzled Nyssa, but there were cracks through which could be seen, or rather just made out in what little light seeped through from the house, the street outside. Suddenly a truck rumbled past, startling Nyssa, and a fluttering of paddles at her shoulder informed her that Dad was hovering behind her. The truck was followed by three more, each driven by a shaven-headed man, the back trailer open-topped and carrying twelve more shaven-headed men wearing leather capes. 'It's the police,' gasped Dad Hartley. 'A whole bloomin' convoy of 'em. On manoeuvres at this time of night? What can they be playing at?'

‘Dad,’ Yvonne called worriedly, fearing that someone might notice the light from the window.

Hartley came away. ‘Well, we don’t want to know, do we?’ he said certainly, shaking his head. ‘It’s none of our business. Put the kettle on, Frank, and we’ll see about putting the Holiday decorations up.’

Grave Subjects

The Doctor had seen the trucks too, not just those carrying policemen, but several empty ones as well, and he had followed them, keeping at angles that put him outside the sweep of their headlamps. He was unaware, however, that he too was being followed, until he stopped abruptly and heard the clap of a shoe on the paving stones. He swung his torch around and shone it right in the face of his pursuer. It was Thomas Dodd, which didn't surprise the Doctor at all. 'Are you following me, Mr Dodd?' he asked.

The torchlight in his face had startled Dodd, and he was clutching his chest. 'Strewth!' he gasped breathlessly. 'Doctor, you didn't half give my paddles a turn!' The Doctor found it ironic that a man who disapproved of the new

technological transplants and whose business favoured more natural organs had himself had a cardioectomy and been fitted with a cybernetic chest unit. Dodd covered up. 'I didn't know we were going the same way home,' he said innocently.

'What a coincidence,' the Doctor smiled with a faint hint of sarcasm. 'I was heading for the cinema when I saw these trucks.'

Another vehicle appeared further down the road, running up fast, its headlights' beams swinging closer and closer to the pavement. Dodd grabbed the Doctor's arm and pulled him back from the road out of reach of the beams. 'Watch out!' he hissed.

The new vehicle had not been a truck. It was a digger with one of the augmented policemen driving it. 'Something's going on under the cover of darkness,' the Doctor observed.

'Well, I've never seen so many police,' Dodd agreed. 'The whole area's cordoned off, maybe the whole district, right down to the North stalagstacks.'

'And?'

'Word is they're levelling the area for new parade grounds or something.'

‘So many of them? Let’s take a look.’

‘You can’t. You’ll never get through.’

As more trucks rumbled by, along with another digger, the Doctor rounded on Dodd. ‘Don’t tell me there isn’t some back way to sneak in,’ he said sharply. ‘If those trucks are going in empty, what will they be bringing out? It won’t be tea and cakes, that’s for certain.’

Another truck rattled past. Dodd did his best to find the Doctor’s gaze in the lacking light, failed miserably to do so and shuffled back off the road, beckoning the strange healthy visitor to follow.

‘There you are,’ Dad Hartley announced as he pulled the dusty, bent and shabby artificial tree out of the cupboard in the hallway and carried it through to the living room. ‘One tree!’

‘Aw, dad!’ whined Yvonne as she looked at the pathetic old seasonal ornament.

Hartley shrugged. ‘Maybe it has seen better days, but with a few baubles and a bit of tinsel... What do you think, Nyssa?’

Nyssa thought about it. 'It'll be a little like the tree in the Square,' she suggested, recalling where the TARDIS had been parked and her gentle spat with the Doctor outside the Roxy Decaphonic. Then she remembered something else. 'What about your chest unit? Is it better now?'

'Humming along a treat,' Hartley replied happily. 'You're a tonic, lass.'

Frank groaned from his seat as Yvonne pulled a large cardboard box full of sparkly bits and pieces across the carpet. 'I can't do homework with all this going on!' he protested.

'Then get and help me with the washing up,' said Dad, marching into the kitchen, provoking yet another of Frank's groans as the lad got up to join him.

'And good riddance,' sniffed his sister, looking up at Nyssa.

'Well, just don't nick all the baubles for earrings,' gibed Frank as he left the room.

'Take no notice,' Yvonne told Nyssa. 'Brothers are like that.'

'So I gather,' Nyssa smiled. She herself was an only child and therefore had no real idea of what siblings would be like, but of course

there had been Adric and Tegan. Almost a family, but only almost.

‘You’ll be glad to get back to your family for the holiday,’ Yvonne inferred, producing a plastic object shaped like a kind of star and covered with silver glitter.

‘Yes,’ Nyssa smiled weakly, deciding it best not to tell Yvonne that there was no one in the universe sufficiently biologically similar to her to be called a relative, save one man whom she hated violently. ‘I’d really like that.’

‘I suppose you’ve got a really posh tree at home,’ Yvonne continued, glancing at Nyssa’s clothes with slight envy, sure that their visitor was a rich girl from a well-to-do family. Not only were her clothes nicer, but she had a posh accent and was plumper around the face, fuller at the hips and breasts than Yvonne was. She was getting good meals every day. Really good meals.

Nyssa perched on the edge of the armchair Frank had vacated. ‘Not exactly,’ she said. ‘But at our Autumn Festival, when the leaves were turning amber, we’d hang all the trees in the garden with paper lanterns and the people would sing at the gates. Then the fruits, all

purple and red, would be carried in on silver panniers. Then we'd have the Battle: people and Consuls pelting each other with fruit. That was the best part. It was so undignified!

'A whole garden of trees!' gasped Yvonne at the thought, then her face was sullen. 'The only real trees are in the hydro-house, where I work – oh, and the lit-up one in the Committee Palace Square.'

Nyssa looked sullen too. She had shared an intimate part of her life with someone who could never be convinced it was realistically possible. She decided to disentangle herself from the confusion of further explanations which wouldn't be believed anyway. 'I'm sorry Yvonne,' she said sadly. 'I like to imagine things.'

Yvonne looked up sympathetically, 'Me too,' she nodded, and the situation was diffused. 'I just wish we could all be together again, Mum and dad, even Frank.'

It occurred to Nyssa that Yvonne's mother had died. 'Yes,' she nodded, understanding the pain. 'Mother and father, and the Doctor too.' Her eyes misted slightly.

Yvonne put a hand on hers. 'Don't worry about your friend.'

'Actually I was thinking about that poor woman outside,' said Nyssa.

'Taken into care, I expect,' Yvonne said with a shrug, seeming not to care. 'The Committee does whatever's for the best.' Nyssa didn't believe that for one second, but she didn't say anything, partially because these people wouldn't understand, and partially because of another distraction. 'Ooh!' Yvonne squealed delightedly. 'I've found Matty!' She lifted an object out of the cardboard box. It wriggled and squeaked. 'He's been missing ages. Must've been hiding in here all the time.'

'What is it?' asked Nyssa, puzzled by the sight of something that was as large as a medium-sized rodent and looked like an armour-plated cross between a bug and a snake.

'A Mat,' Yvonne told her, cuddling it.

'Is it some sort of worm?' asked Nyssa.

The question puzzled Yvonne. She was sure that everyone knew about them, and surely this rich girl's rich parents would have rushed to buy her the most expensive deluxe model

as soon as they were out in the shops. ‘Did you not ever have one?’ she asked. ‘They were the latest craze, ages ago. Everyone went mad for them.’ She held the thing up and made cooing noises to it as though it were alive. Nyssa suddenly realised that the Mat *was* alive; half and half, like the Trillerby. And the name, “Mat” sounded like something else. If Trillerby was an example of the Committee’s experimentation on birds, Matty was surely an example of what they did to rats. Yvonne was still wittering. ‘Dad got him for me. That’s what he does. Catching the ones that get away and go wild.’

‘He’s a Mat-catcher,’ Nyssa acknowledged the parody, amused by it despite her discomfort within the concept surrounding it. That of course was what he and Yvonne had been up to when Nyssa had met them, back at the shed.

Yvonne looked disappointed. ‘The metal creature’s movements were erratic and it seemed to be drawing out its squeaks. ‘He’s not right,’ she sighed.

‘Would you like me to have a look at it for you?’ Nyssa suggested. She didn’t like what

the Mat represented, but on the face of it saw the little pet machine as harmless, like the bird. Perhaps she could fix it like she had fixed Mr Hartley's chest unit and put the smile back on Yvonne's face. It would give her something to do until she could get out of this place.

The cellar was musty and dank, but the Doctor, led by Thomas Dodd, pressed on through it without complaint, knowing that each step was a step nearer some solid answers. The cellars in some areas were connected by small subways built centuries ago by smugglers as a way of making it easier to shift their contraband discreetly. The tunnels had been forgotten by all but a few, and Dodd was one of the tiny handful still old enough to remember being told about them by a father who learned about them at school. He had gone in through the trap door in his own shop and led the Doctor through the network into the cellar of a church, the church that lay in the heart of the exclusion zone, and therefore the destination of the

trucks and diggers. As they had journeyed, Dodd and the Doctor had heard vehicles rumbling above their heads, the sound telling them that they were on the right route. Finally they reached a flight of stone steps and Dodd went up first to check. He lifted the trap door and found no one in the room above. He clambered up and allowed the Doctor to follow, carefully closing the trap after them.

The room was a vestry, and the Doctor glanced around it. A small table and chair, a few old smocks hanging up, and a plaque that identified the place as the Church of Former-Day Souls. 'We should be able to get a good view of what's going on from the bell tower,' Dodd said, opening a door that led to more steps. 'Mind the clock workings as you go up.' The Doctor followed Dodd into the darkness, and for a while it was as pitch black as the streets, but after maybe twenty steps there was light shining from above, illuminating heavy iron cogs as big as mill wheels. Finally they emerged into the bell tower proper, its four sides each offering a portal to look out of and the huge bell above hanging over the cogs below. The Doctor looked out from the

tower. There were floodlamps everywhere, illuminating the churchyard below with its mish-mash of headstones. 'I expect if it were light there'd be quite a view from here,' the Time Lord breathed.

'During the daytime you can see the whole city from the bell tower,' said Dodd. 'Not than anyone comes here anymore. To the church, I mean.'

The Doctor nodded. 'Like the cinema. All the old temples of worship closing down.' He looked down at the churchyard. 'There was no one there as yet, but the floodlamps had been set up recently and there were some unmanned diggers near the gates. 'Now, I wonder what they're doing down there.'

'I told you,' Dodd said. 'Levelling the area.'

'Without touching the buildings?' the Doctor shook his head. 'No. I have a feeling their purpose here is far more specific than that.'

'Why?' Dodd asked, bewildered. 'What else could they possibly..?' He stopped as he looked out from the tower and noticed that the earth in the churchyard had been disturbed – a *lot* of the earth. Coffins were exposed, their wood rotting, some of them

cracked or opened, decayed bodies and bones on display for all to see. 'Blimey...' Dodd breathed. 'They're digging up the graveyard!' The Doctor heard a heavy clumping sound from the stairwell and turned to face it. 'I think we've got company,' he said worriedly. A policeman appeared in the doorway, brandishing his whip. 'Do not move!' he ordered. 'You are recognised escapees and are to be detained.'

6

Disturbances

Frank Hartley looked dejectedly at the plate containing the remains of Nyssa's meal. 'There was still quite a bit of food left there. Irritated, he scraped it into the bin and passed the empty plate to his father for washing. 'She didn't eat much,' Frank complained. 'Just picked at it. All our rations for the Holiday going to waste.'

'We'll manage,' Dad replied, refusing to let his son's teenage strop make their guest seem unwelcome. He dipped the dish in the soapy water that filled the sink and took the dishmop to it.

'You know what's happening, don't you?' Frank said, changing tack. 'The manoeuvres.'

It's the final push. The work crews are on the verge of breaking through to the surface!

Dad shook his head. 'Well, you know what I think about that. It's a long way off. If ever.'

He smiled as he heard the girls laughing from the living room. Vonnie hadn't had another girl to play with for a long time now, and it was good that the visitor had been a girl near his daughter's age, someone to talk to on her own level. Raising a daughter was so much harder without her mother. Mabel had always known what to say when Yvonne was confused or upset or just didn't know. Frank was hard to cope with at times, but he was going through the difficult age, which Vonnie was now past, and as he got older he'd settle down and be easier to talk to. But Frank was a boy, and fathers and boys could talk about things. Who was there to talk to sweet Yvonne about the facts of life? Who to shatter her innocence and prepare her to spend her adult years in a dangerous and disappointing world?

Frank was still ranting. 'I want to join up,' he was saying stubbornly. 'There's no point waiting for call-up papers. I want to be in

there now, when the breakthrough comes. I want to see the sky and not go mad.'

Dad sighed. 'It's an heroic gesture, son,' he said firmly. 'But you know the answer.'

'I'm *not* too young!' growled Frank, sick of being treated like a child despite the fact that at sixteen that was exactly what he was. 'I'd send home my pay,' he promised in the hope of appeasing his father.

'And we'd never see you again,' grunted his Dad. 'Name one person we know who's come back from the work crews.' He knew Frank couldn't. 'I don't want to be proud of a black bordered telegram with sympathy from the Central Advisory Committee. I want my son here, where he belongs.'

'Well, what about what *I* want?' snapped Frank. 'You never listen to me! You look after strangers and give them our rations, and now there's nothing left from when you sold mum!' He stormed out through the living room. 'Eric Krailford's joining up,' he said spitefully to Yvonne, playing on his sister's crush on their neighbour's son.

'He wouldn't!' Yvonne yelled.

‘Yes he is,’ Frank snapped and marched out into the hallway to go to his room, slamming the door of the living room on the way.

Yvonne lapsed into a coughing fit, and her father rushed in. ‘Here,’ he said quickly, passing the stricken girl her pill bottle. She gulped down two tablets. The coughing eased. ‘I’m sorry you had to see all that, Nyssa,’ Hartley told his young house guest.

‘Please,’ Nyssa said gently. ‘Don’t worry about me. Yvonne’s more important.’

Yvonne shook her head, her breathing slowing. ‘I’m feeling better already,’ she promised.

‘Mr Hartley, I really am going to have to go now,’ announced Nyssa. ‘I’ve imposed enough on you already.’

‘Nyssa, no!’ Yvonne complained.

‘It’s just not good enough,’ Hartley blustered, referring to Frank’s behaviour. ‘He shouldn’t say things like that.’

Nyssa stood up. ‘He’s right, though. I’ll speak to my friend and we’ll bring you some food to make up for what you’ve given me. I really must go before I cause you any more trouble.’

Suddenly there was a loud bang on the door. At this time of night, there was only one kind of person who would be banging on doors.

‘Police!’ Yvonne whimpered.

‘Get to your room, quick,’ Hartley said urgently. ‘Take Nyssa with you.’ He knew that there was an unboarded window in Yvonne’s room and that it would be big enough for Nyssa to use it as an escape hatch. ‘I’ll hold them up as long as I can. Go!’

Yvonne grabbed Nyssa’s arm and pulled her down the hallway.

‘This area is restricted to civilians,’ the policeman said, its tone so devoid of character save for the pitch fluctuations that it could easily have been the one that the Doctor had pole-axed with a firework earlier, even though the Doctor was pretty sure it wasn’t.

‘Why?’ the Doctor demanded. ‘What aren’t we supposed to see?’

‘You are recognised criminals required for assessment by the Committee,’ the policeman said, either unwilling or unable to answer the Doctor’s valid question. It stepped clear of

the doorway to move around to the Doctor. Dodd saw his chance. 'Leg it, Doctor!' he shouted and bolted into the doorway.

But the Doctor wasn't quick enough. 'The policeman's whip lashed out at his upper arm, causing him to cry in pain. 'You are under arrest,' said the policeman.

'Twice in one day?' replied the Doctor. 'I think not.' The whip flashed out to him again and he dodged the blow but caught the thong of leather before it retracted. He coiled it quickly around his fingers to stay it, clenched his fist and pulled hard. The policeman was pulled off balance. He staggered forward and fell into the clock workings. Before the policeman had the chance to scramble out, the Doctor rushed to the lever that turned the clock on and off and slammed it down hard. The policeman gurgled and screeched as the clock workings started, his bones snapping along with the clamps that held his joints and his chest unit exploding as the cogs chewed him up.

Thomas Dodd stood in the doorway to the stairwell, his mouth wide open in utter astonishment. 'Who *are* you?' he gasped.

The Doctor was untying the bell ropes from their brackets on the wall. 'No time for that now,' he replied. 'Help me with these.'

Bewildered and confused, Dodd decided just to go along with it and started untying some of the ropes himself. Guided by the Doctor, he wound the ropes around the clock pendulum and allowed the cogs to take up the slack. 'Digging up the graveyard is disgusting,' Dodd stammered, trying to make sense of it all. 'That's what it is. That is going too far.'

'Thomas,' the Doctor asked as he finished applying his ropes to their task. 'How do you see the future of this city in say, five years' time?'

'Sorry, mate,' Dodd answered. 'I've got a business to run. I don't do philosophy.'

'Do you ever bother to think past your own front counter? You'd better, because this city's heading for a very nasty future indeed.'

The church bell chimed.

'...And that thing,' the Doctor continued, pointing down through the cogs at the mutilated policeman lying on the floor beneath the workings. 'That travesty that was once a human being is part of it.' The bell

chimed again. ‘I don’t know what it’s going to take – I’m not even sure I want to stop it – but I can at least give you all a wake-up call, because it’s up to you, not me, to change things and stop this horror once and for all.’

Dad Hartley pulled open the front door after letting the policeman bang on it a few times. ‘I’ve got a poorly daughter, you know!’ he snapped at the bald-headed, leather-caped man-machine that strode in with another behind him. ‘What do you lot want at this hour?’

‘You are harbouring a stranger,’ said the first policeman.

‘Are you sure you haven’t been misinformed?’ demanded Hartley.

‘All reports must be checked,’ the policeman replied simply. It looked to its colleague. ‘This apartment is registered to three occupants only. Search it.’ The other policeman marched into the living room.

Nyssa pulled the last few inches of herself out of the bedroom window and planted her feet

on the ground. 'Thank you so much for everything,' she said to Yvonne.

Yvonne thrust something through the window into Nyssa's hands. It was the Mat, wrapped in a polythene sheet. 'Take this to remember us.'

'Thank you,' Nyssa smiled, feeling pained at all the trouble she'd caused.

'Never mind that,' hissed Yvonne. 'Just go.'
Nyssa turned and ran.

Yvonne watched her go for a moment and then returned to the living room to find Frank telling the police where Nyssa was. One of the policemen was twisting her father's human arm. The policemen marched through to the back bedroom to look for the intruder. Yvonne rounded on her brother. 'How could you?' she spat.

'They were hurting dad,' Frank replied in a hard tone, knowing that Yvonne would understand.

She did. 'You okay dad?'

'Aye,' Dad nodded. 'Did she get away?'

'Yeah,' nodded Yvonne.

'I wonder what they'll do with the rest of us,' Dad mused aloud.

Suddenly Yvonne heard it, the chiming in the distance. 'What's that?'

Her father's jaw dropped. 'That's the bell in the old church tower,' he said quietly. 'But that hasn't rung for years.'

'Why's it ringing now?' Yvonne asked, somehow able to read something into it. 'Is it a message? A warning?'

Her father and brother looked worriedly toward the curtained window. 'The truth was that neither of them had any idea.'

The whole city was alive with crowds, those who could find them carrying electric torches, some carrying oil lamps or gas lanterns and even some carrying flaming torches made from bits of timber and rags dipped in whatever accelerants could be found. 'The Doctor had managed to pick his way through them to the TARDIS, where he found Nyssa waiting. He quickly opened the box up and shoved her inside.'

'I knew this wasn't Earth,' Nyssa said bitterly as she stepped into the console room.

‘Yes,’ the Doctor nodded. ‘But I had to make sure it was the planet I thought it was before...’

‘Before what?’ Nyssa prompted.

‘Before I take us away from here,’ the Doctor finished finally, closing the TARDIS doors and beginning to set new coordinates.

‘You can’t do that, Doctor,’ Nyssa protested. ‘Not this time.’

But he wasn’t listening. ‘Did you hear the bell?’ he said. ‘It’s a reveille, to wake people up, and once they see what’s going on they can take control of their own destiny.’ He pulled a switch.

Nyssa put out an arm and barred his way to other controls. ‘No, Doctor,’ she insisted.

‘Please don’t argue,’ the Doctor said. ‘I’m not staying. I know this place’s future.’

‘So do I,’ snapped Nyssa.

The Doctor stopped and looked at her in surprise. ‘What?’

Nyssa nodded. ‘It’s as obvious as it is horrible,’ she said, almost weeping. ‘The people out there are one day going to become the Cybermen.’ She remembered the Cybermen. Remembered what they were and

what they had used to be, what they stood for and what they had done. 'It's already started.' The Doctor nodded sadly. 'Yes. This is Mondas, Earth's long-lost twin planet, and I can't interfere with its history any more than I could've interfered with yours.'

'But there aren't Cybermen yet,' Nyssa protested, hoping against all hope that she was right about that. 'We could stop it before it goes too far.'

'It's not our place!' shouted the Doctor. 'If anyone is going to change the future of Mondas it *must* be the Mondasians. If we're discovered to have any part of it then the whole future of the galaxy could be unbalanced, and we would be to blame.'

In a metal-walled vault, a mechanised door slid open to reveal a Cyberman. This one was complete, a full convert, not merely a partially augmented and reprogrammed Mondasian of the type used in the police force. The Cyberman marched forward into the vault and addressed the Committee. 'Police report a

disturbance in the city,' it announced. 'Hostile intruders have been observed.'

The row of men sat still in their giant metal frame, its tubes and pipes connecting to their dead bodies and living brains mixing fluids that kept the vital parts of them alive whilst disregarding what remained. Cables and other wires ran from prostheses bolted to their shaven heads down to a rack of computers with flickering screens running in front of the huge frame, the screens displaying the data shared between the Committee members as they deliberated. 'The Committee is agreed,' a grating robotic voice echoed around the vault from the huge speaker at the centre of the frame. 'Insurgency must be crushed. Find the intruders and eliminate them. Immediately.'

Control and Communication

Nyssa was still holding the sheet of white plastic wrapped around Yvonne Hartley's pet. Her hands were sweating and she felt in her frustration that she might drop it at any time. The Doctor had failed to notice it thus far. She had meant to put it in her room as soon as she got back to the TARDIS, but her sudden argument with the Doctor had stalled her. She knew she should really have expected there to be a disagreement, because she had worked out by now that this was the birthplace of the Cybermen and also that the Doctor had suspected that all along. He had told her just to look, not to get involved, and she had tried desperately at every possible opportunity to flee the hospitality of the Hartleys, rude as it would have been to do such a thing when they had been so kind to

her, but she had failed and it was now too late to think about not getting involved. Nyssa *was* involved and there was nothing she or the Doctor could do about it. 'These people are suffering terribly,' she persisted. 'They're good people, and some of them are sick. I've promised to help them.'

The Doctor could barely believe what he was hearing. 'You've *what*?'

'I've promised to help,' Nyssa said again, more quietly and calmly. 'I'm sorry, Doctor. You don't have to get involved if you don't want to. You can leave me behind.' She headed for the door leading to the corridor.

'Nyssa,' the Doctor called after her, half worried and half struck dumb by the insanity of what his companion had just said. 'Where are you going?'

'To get a few things to take with me,' she said, exiting the console room.

The Doctor dashed after her, joining her in the corridor. 'You're being unreasonable,' he protested.

'I want to give these people some hope,' Nyssa retorted. 'What's so unreasonable about that? I want to save them from themselves,

prevent the Cybermen ever existing. Think of the lives, the whole worlds that could be saved.'

The Doctor sighed. 'It's a noble sentiment, Nyssa, but you can't do it by yourself. You're not an army. You can't just turn the whole of history around on a sixpence!'

'I've seen you do it,' Nyssa countered, playing on the Doctor's weakness for abusing double-standards as a means to reach the moral high-ground.

But this time the Doctor wasn't going to be beaten into submission. 'If we destroy one history we'll only replace it with another, and there's no way to be sure that whatever replaces the history of the Cybermen isn't worse!'

'And what have you been doing?' demanded Nyssa, still fighting to balance the argument in her favour and that of the Hartleys. 'What about your wake-up call?'

'The story of the Cybermen is legendary across the galaxy,' the Doctor told her. 'The lost planet, twin sister to Earth, wandering around space off its orbit, its population already millennia ahead of Earth

technologically, gradually replacing bodily organs with mechanical parts in a final desperate bid to avoid extinction.'

Nyssa got it. 'Until they finally replace their own consciousness with the cold precision of machine logic,' she sobbed softly.

'A logic so cold it snuffs out the spark in people,' nodded the Doctor. 'I'm not even sure they *are* people by the end. Just so many tinned leftovers. I think I'd rather lose all my remaining lives than become a Cyberman.'

'The people I met were actually very kind,' said Nyssa as she entered her bedroom and dropped the plastic parcel onto her bed. She took a tissue from a small box amidst what had been Tegan's makeup and wiped the sweat from her palms.

'Yes, yes,' replied the Doctor irritably. 'But you must see – the infinity of Time and Space is all laid out like a huge game of consequences. Sometimes you play, sometimes you sit on the sidelines.' He watched Nyssa packing things into a bag and added as she faced him, 'And sometimes you run on afterwards with a stretcher.'

Nyssa came out of her room and neglected to close the door. Both caught up in their argument, neither noticed the silvery shape of the Cybermat from the Hartley house wriggling out of its plastic wrapping, dropping off the bed onto the floor and scuttling out into the corridor.

‘We *have* had this discussion before, Doctor,’ Nyssa wept. ‘It’s a pity that didn’t occur to you when it came to sacrificing Adric.’

That stung. The Doctor was quiet, looking into Nyssa’s tear-filled eyes. ‘So much that never gets said,’ he whispered gently, putting a hand on her arm. The Cybermat wriggled past unobserved during the moment of tenderness, heading for the console room. ‘Had to boil over sooner or later,’ the Doctor continued, feeling a lump rising in his own throat, but suppressing it.

‘I’ve got things to do,’ Nyssa said gently. The Doctor nodded. ‘Yes, of course. I’ll be waiting.’ And he let her go.

The church bell was still ringing and the crowds poured through the open streets, the

city more packed with life than it had ever been during any of its daytimes. Augmented police stormed about on horses, shouting orders and trying to settle things down. From a small prefabricated security tower a constable with a megaphone announced that there was nothing to see and ordered people to go home or else risk facing severe punishment. The citizens looked on the verge of riot, some of them shouting that the dead should be left in peace and occasionally hurling obscenities at the police officers.

Sisterman Constant had arrived on the scene by this time, having been diverted from her late rounds by not only the peal of the bell but also the citizens' reaction to it. She made her way to the front of the crowd and found one of the policemen, this one not on a horse but instead standing by the fence that had been erected around the churchyard. 'What's going on?' Constant demanded. 'Who's been ringing the bell?'

'Unnamed intruders have been observed,' was the closest thing to an explanation that the constable could possibly offer.

More strangers. Constant didn't like that. 'I reported a stranger myself,' she told the constable, and it occurred to her that there was no way that the advent of her stranger and that of more could be exclusively coincidental. The bell stopped, the ropes having been cut by police inside the tower and the bell itself secured. 'Well, thank goodness for that!' Constant hooted.

'The Committee has advised the use of force to disperse the crowd,' the constable told the Sisterman in a way that seemed as casual as one might tell a friend what was in one's shopping bag while waiting for a bus. He indicated a row of cybernetic policemen, all without horses but with whips, standing at the gates of the churchyard.

'Then you'd better get on with it,' Constant said and moved clear of the danger zone.

'Squad,' the constable ordered. 'Advance.' The row of policemen marched forward, lashing everyone in sight with their whips, chorusing the order to get back. Leather thongs bit into hands and faces and tore clothes, and citizens dropped their lamps and torches and ran away.

The Doctor was still standing in the corridor where Nyssa had left him when she came back. He hadn't moved an inch in the twenty minutes or so she'd been gone. She gently took both of his hands and looked up at him, aware that his expression had darkened. 'I'm sorry,' she said quietly. 'I didn't mean it. Not like that. It's just hard realising what this place is, what it means.' She let his hands go. 'And thinking about Adric.'

The Doctor nodded. 'We never did stop to mourn him, did we? I imagine on Traken there were profound and beautiful ceremonies to honour fallen heroes.'

'They'd seem out of place here,' Nyssa told him. 'The Hartleys... the family I met, are poor. They don't seem to have much to live on. Everything's rationed by some sort of government. Yvonne mentioned a Committee.'

The Doctor had heard plenty about that. 'The Committee again,' he muttered, realising that they seemed to be at the heart of everybody's troubles here.

‘They gave me food,’ said Nyssa. ‘Food they couldn’t really afford to give. I just want to give them some back. That’s all.’

The Doctor nodded. ‘Of course. It’s only right. Yes, you go. I’ll wait here for you.’ They walked up the corridor together. ‘There are already signs of Cybertechnology everywhere in the city, you know,’ he told Nyssa. ‘Even the police horses are more machine than animal.’

That made Nyssa suddenly remember the souvenir that Yvonne had given her. ‘I was given something like that. It’s in my room.’

‘Something like what?’ the Doctor said with unexpected urgency, sounding worried.

‘A house pet of sorts, half machine, like a sort of... metal rodent.’

The Doctor’s eyes widened. ‘A Cybermat!’ he roared. ‘*You brought a Cybermat into my TARDIS!*’

Nasty Medicine

Sisterman Constant showed her identity card to the guard on the gate. The guard, like the policemen, was augmented, though he had more armour on than the police and wore no cape. His uniform, if it could be called such, was a coverall suit made of a thick polymer like plastic, with the usual clamps to bolt everything in place and a mesh of wires underneath. Instead of a belt with a whip on it, at the guard's waist hung a sophisticated weapon. It was broad, covering his entire midriff, a kind of bracket with handles either side and a large light-emitting disc at the centre. The guard had boots on but bare hands, like the police, and like the police his face and head were clean-shaven but he showed no sign of facial expression. Around

his neck he wore the cybernetic speech collar that was cabled up to his vocal folds through the hole it covered in his throat. He examined Constant's identity card. He had seen it literally thousands of times but still always checked it. Orders were not made to be questioned or disobeyed, and security was more important at the Committee Palace than anywhere else on the entire planet. The guard handed the card back to Constant and activated a control. The large opaque grey gates, in reality solid iron doors, swung inwards to allow Constant through, and once she was inside they swung closed again with a heavy, resonant clang. While the edifice outside was all ancient architecture that some people might once have called beautiful and full of character, the inside offered perfectly square corridors with tiled walls and floors all in white, clinical and featureless. The ceilings were seeded with powerful electrical strip-lights of a technology far more sophisticated than anything allowed outside in the city, so brilliant that they eliminated all shadow. Constant proceeded down the corridor, past the sealed metal hatchways that led to

laboratories and incubation areas and such and headed for the main part of this, the hospital section of the palace. The corridor terminated abruptly, without junctions, in a pair of large dark red double doors with tiny round windows set into them, and Constant just barged through in her usual casual manner. The room she entered was vast, an open floor surrounded by complex apparatus lining the walls, computer banks and screens feeding data to the various white coated members of staff moving from one to another. Cables ran from every machine around the walls into the centre of the floor itself, where they attached to yet more apparatus. If the city outside was a parody of Earth's 1950s period, this place was definitely space age. There were trolleys scattered around the floor with men and women lying in them, some with bandaged limbs, some with their faces masked, some dead with white sheets covering their faces. At one end of the oblong room there were three oval berths set into the wall, each about eight feet in height and three in width, each containing an inert but complete Cyberman.

Chaos had broken out in the Processing Unit, and the place was a hive of activity. Doctors, nurses and technicians ran back and forth, messing with computers, checking people on trolleys, noting down their findings, bumping into each other in their haste and quickly stopping to briefly compare notes. In the centre of the chaos stood a small woman, skinny and malnourished like everybody else on Mondas but showing absolutely no sign of augmentation, much like Constant. The woman had lank straight brown hair with a few greys and a few premature wrinkles. She was perhaps in her mid-thirties but somehow weathered to seem older. She was wearing an open labcoat, a light blue V-neck jumper, grey slacks and flat black shoes, and she was waving and shouting orders, getting everybody going. 'Patient number eight six eight seven,' she shouted to a nurse, who charged over to her with a trolley, nearly running over her feet. On the trolley lay a huge man, clearly at least two hundred and ten pounds of pure muscle, with tubes and cables snaking out of his skin and attaching to bits of machinery that had been bolted to the sides of

the trolley. 'His pulmonary unit's rejecting,' said the little woman urgently, looking down at the yellow gunge bubbling out of the boxy unit fused to his chest. The patient was anaesthetised but his eyes were open wide, rolling in confusion, his face joining the dance by making twisted, disturbed expressions. The woman put a thin band of metal on his forehead and checked the digital screen on it for information on his brain. It didn't look good. 'Switch to auto-backup before his logic walls go down,' she snapped. 'And give him another shot of morphine.' The giant began to gurgle and flexed his strapped-down arms, struggling to get free of the trolley. 'Hold him down!' A couple of male nurses rushed over and grabbed the patient's arms, pushing him back down as hard as they could. The goo from his chest unit was spilling everywhere and the giant started to choke. 'Hold him, I said!' growled the woman. 'He's drowning in his own plasma!'

But it was too late. The monitor on his chest unit showed a flat line, the steady beep now fixed into a staccato hum. The nurse looked up, ashen-faced. 'Sorry, Doctorman Allan.'

Doctorman Christine Allan sighed. 'Just clear it away, will you?' she said exasperatedly, wiping her brow with the back of her hand and turning to walk away. 'I need a drink.' She headed for the double doors and almost bumped into Constant. 'Good evening, Doctorman,' the sister announced.

'Sisterman Constant,' Allan observed, surprised. 'You're back from recruitment early. Bring your reports into my office.' And she charged through the double doors.

Constant caught up to her. 'I see we've lost another crewman,' she said.

'That's the third back from the surface in two days,' Allan confirmed. 'The conditioning won't stabilise. They barely survive a week out there.' She blundered through the door of her office and made straight for her desk, picking up the green bottle she hadn't even been bothered to hide. 'Drink?'

'No, thank you,' Constant replied disapprovingly. 'Are you sure *you* should be drinking?' There was no reply, so Constant tried something else. 'Doctorman, your staff are exhausted.'

‘What do you expect?’ Allan retorted as she dropped into the chair behind her desk. ‘We work all hours with very little in the way of resources, but the Committee just demands more and more. We should stop everything. Stop everything and rethink everything.’

‘You know there’s been trouble in the city?’ the Sisterman asked.

Allan hadn’t known. ‘What sort of trouble?’

‘Nearly a riot,’ Constant told her.

‘You’re joking,’ Allan said, surprised but keeping calm about it, taking an unhealthily heavy gulp of her wine.

‘Someone rang the bell in the old church,’ Constant blustered. ‘Right beside the dig! Had the whole city out.’

Doctorman Allan burst out laughing. ‘That’s the funniest thing I’ve heard in months!’ she crowed. ‘I hope they call the whole disgusting project off. As if dead bones will make any difference! Who’s responsible?’

‘The police don’t know, but there was a strange girl with some of my patients, at their apartment, and apparently there are reports of others, too.’

That was something that Doctorman Allan did not find funny. Instantly her laughter stopped. 'Define *strange*,' she demanded.

'I didn't know her,' Constant explained. 'And I don't think she was carrying any papers. I reported her.'

'But what was she like?'

'Healthy-looking. Well-dressed, well-fed.'

'Nobody's well-fed.' Allan seemed slightly troubled by the concept. 'Perhaps she was one of the troublemakers.'

'It does seem logical,' nodded Constant. 'I'm sure they'll all be rounded up eventually.'

A light chime sounded from a speaker set into the wall at ceiling level, followed by a robotic-sounding voice. 'Doctorman Allan,' it said in a monotone. 'You are required in the Committee Chamber.'

Allan got up. 'Take over the ward, Sister.'

'Yes, Doctor.'

'It's absurd,' Allan said, pouring herself another drink. 'How can strangers exist?'

'Hadn't you better go?' asked Constant.

'I go in my own time,' Allan replied sharply, downing her drink and raising the bottle

again, waving it toward the Sisterman. ‘Sure I can’t tempt you?’

Constant turned her nose up. ‘I think I’d better get to the ward.’ And she marched out of the office.

Doctorman Allan put her glass down on the table and frowned. ‘Strangers,’ she murmured to herself. The idea of strangers was bizarre. She knew that this was the last surviving city on Mondas and that the medical admin staff, especially the Sistermen, should know absolutely every man, woman and child. A nameless visitor couldn’t possibly exist, not as a traveller from another city or even the survivor of a district shutdown. Everyone from cities that had been shut down had been processed by now and most had since died. Strangers couldn’t be real, unless there was a possibility that simply hadn’t occurred either to Allan or anyone else. Before leaving for the Committee Chamber, Allan decided she needed to know more. She touched the intercom button. ‘Hello switchboard,’ she said quickly. ‘Connect me to the Surveillance Department.’

A Whole World of Repairs

The Doctor and Nyssa were hunting for the Cybermat. The first place they had looked had been on Nyssa's bed, where she had left it, but of course they found only the plastic cocoon that had for a short time contained it while Nyssa carried it. The Doctor crouched now on the floor of his companion's room, poking under the bed and under chairs while Nyssa emptied drawers and cupboards hoping to turn it out. 'Is there any sign of it?' asked Nyssa desperately, feeling terribly guilty for bringing it in. She'd had no idea that it was at all dangerous, and the Doctor had briefly explained during the search that Cybermats had a talent for technological sabotage and could as good as smell energy from a mile away.

The Doctor, now on all fours, shook his head in frustration. 'No,' he said rudely, looking down again. He was furious at Nyssa for stupidly bringing an alien artefact about which she knew virtually nothing into his ship, something that an intelligent girl like Nyssa, with all her experiences in travelling with him, should know better than to do.

'Well it can't have got out of the TARDIS,' Nyssa said worriedly.

'Obviously,' was the Doctor's gruff reply.

'I'm sure Mr Hartley would help,' Nyssa suggested pathetically, trying anything she could to stop him being cross with her. 'He's a Mat-catcher.'

'They're that much of a pest, are they?' the Doctor retorted sarcastically. An alarm sounded and the Doctor sprang instantly to his feet. 'Console room!' he shouted and was gone. Nyssa ran after him, seeing the door at the end of the corridor close behind him. She rushed through and immediately started choking on the cloud of smoke. The many-sided TARDIS control console was on fire, or rather part of it was. One of the panels sprouted flames a little smaller than a boy

scouts' campfire. 'The Doctor had grabbed a small extinguisher from somewhere and applied it rapidly to its task. The fire went out, but the alarm was still sounding. The Doctor checked another panel on the console. Luckily that one had survived. 'Energy leakage,' he said worriedly. 'Nyssa, the isolator failsafe, quickly!' He pointed to a control just out of his reach, nearer to her.

Nyssa saw the switch that basically shut off all power to the TARDIS console but left everything else running. She pressed on it but it wouldn't budge. 'It's stuck!' she wailed.

'Hit it!' the Doctor roared. Her arm swung down hard, there was a click and the soft background hum of the TARDIS console using power was gone, leaving the console room oddly silent. The Doctor was on all fours again, poking around in the console's boxy stem. Finally he pulled something out: a metallic object, charred in some places, melted and dented in others, and dead. 'It gnawed right into an energy conduit,' he said. 'Burnt out.' He stood up and tossed it to Nyssa.

She caught it. It looked a mess. 'Oh, Doctor I truly am sorry,' she said guiltily. 'We must

have some spares. I could mend the console for you, as it's my fault.'

'It's not a bicycle puncture,' the Doctor snapped. He looked at Nyssa. She was deeply upset. He sighed. 'I'm sorry,' he said gently, waving away the few wisps of smoke. 'By all means take a look. You're good at this sort of thing. I'll just go and get a breath of fresh air.' He pulled the door control and to his surprise and relief it worked, and he strode outside.

Instantly he slammed the door as he spotted a small group of Cybermats clustered on the pavement nearby. One of them was black instead of silver and had dim red lights for eyes. 'No you don't,' he snapped, kicking it across the pavement as it wriggled close. 'No more Cybermats in my TARDIS.'

'Careful!' called a voice and the Doctor looked up in the slowly increasing light of the morning floodlamps to see where it had come from. 'That's a Mark XII Surveillance Model you just kicked,' the teenage boy said as he approached. 'Committee property. You could get in real trouble if you damage it.' He peered at it with interest. 'You don't see many about.'

‘And I suppose I should count myself lucky?’ huffed the Doctor. Then he realised he was being rude to the boy. ‘How d’you do,’ he said, trying again. ‘I’m the Doctor.’

The boy seemed to pick up on something at the mention of the name. ‘Do you know a girl called Nyssa?’

The Doctor in turn picked up on that. ‘Is your name Hartley?’ he asked. ‘Father the local Mat-catcher?’

‘I’m Frank Hartley, yeah,’ the boy nodded.

‘Thank you for looking after her, Frank,’ the Doctor said kindly. ‘I hope she wasn’t too much trouble?’

‘What,’ Frank grunted. ‘Before or after the police came for her?’

The Doctor was annoyed again. ‘She didn’t mention that part.’

‘So where is she then?’ asked Frank.

‘In there,’ the Doctor gestured to the TARDIS. ‘Go on in.’

‘Two of us wouldn’t fit in there,’ Frank snorted.

‘Nyssa will be happy to explain the dimensional anomaly to you,’ the Doctor answered dismissively, waving the lad toward

the box. 'Go on, in you go. I have a call to make. Tell her I'll be back later. Good morning!' And he strode off.

Frank watched him for a moment, then shrugged and pushed on the door of the box. He almost choked when he found himself inside the enormous white room with all the circles on the walls and the angular mushroom thing with controls on top and Nyssa's bum wriggling about underneath in the middle. 'Crikey!' he exclaimed loudly. He heard a squeak and a thump and looked down.

Nyssa scrambled from under the console, rubbing the bump on her head. 'Frank!' she yelped in surprise. 'How did you get in?'

'The Doctor let me in. He said he'd be back later.' Frank looked around the huge room, struggling to take it in. 'Are we underground?'

'No,' Nyssa replied with a smile as she got to her feet. 'It's a dimensional anomaly.'

Frank nodded, still none the wiser. 'That's what the Doctor said. I heard the Committee Palace was like this.'

'Have you come for any particular reason, Frank?' asked Nyssa. 'What did the police do?'

Frank shrugged. 'Turned the place over,' he replied. 'Questioned us for hours over who you were, then broke a few things and left.'

'I'm sorry,' Nyssa said sympathetically. 'I really didn't want to cause you any trouble.'

Frank failed to notice the apology. His mind was on something else. 'Then, first post, this official letter arrived. Call-up papers for Yvonne.'

'Call-up?'

'For the work crews. That's why the Sisterman visited: picking out likely recruits.'

Nyssa was confused. She had no idea what exactly the work crews were or what they did, but it probably wasn't a nice job if one had to be conscripted for it. 'When does she go?'

'Gone already,' Frank said glumly. 'Said it was her duty. Never seen dad so cut up. He says we'll never see her again. He asked me to find you.'

'Me?' Nyssa was slightly caught by surprise. She had no idea what, if anything, she could do about it. 'Frank,' she said kindly, 'I hope you understand why your father is so distressed. I know what it is to lose close family and...'

But Frank Hartley wasn't interested. 'Why her, though?' he shouted petulantly. 'Why her and not me? It should've been me!'

'Doctorman Allan,' the Committee chorused as one in its mechanised monotone. 'Power resources are low. Soon life in the city will be unsustainable.'

'You mean *human* life,' Allan sneered, looking up at the terrible state that was the Committee itself. She had nothing but contempt for it. She served it only because of two things: firstly because it held the purse-strings; secondly because it would have one of its cybernetic thugs – the cybernetic thugs she had been trying to improve upon – break her neck if she didn't.

The Committee ignored the gibe. 'You must work faster,' it ordered.

'Impossible,' Allan snapped. 'My staff are dropping already and the death rate on the work crews is increasing.'

'More surgical material will be provided,' the Committee said. Not a promise; merely a fact.

‘More dead bones?’ snorted Allan. ‘I’m running a transplant unit here, not a backstreet butcher’s shop with secondhand organs fitted under the counter!’ She was becoming more and more infuriated. Why couldn’t she make the obsessed contraption see sense?

‘Processing must increase,’ the Committee insisted. That seemed to be its sole priority these days. It really was keen on the cybernetic augmentation programme.

‘People are weak!’ Allan protested. ‘We need time to optimise the ratio of technology to biology.’

The main chorus of the Committee was silent for a moment, its multitude of voices now broken up and directed this way and that, as if the members, the dead men in the frame, were discussing it amongst themselves. Finally the voices bled together again. ‘The Committee disagrees,’ it said, a single entity once more. ‘Processing rates will be increased. The city uses too many vital resources. It will be shut down.’

‘But that’s insane!’ Allan screamed at it.

‘Sacrifices must be made,’ it answered simply.

Allan was steaming. ‘Why?’ she demanded almost violently. ‘What could possibly be more important than saving people?’

The Committee’s next answer was as simple as its last, but deeply more disturbing. Sufficiently so in fact to sober Doctorman Allan up instantly.

‘*We* must survive,’ it said.

Neighbourhood Watch

The Committee waited for Doctorman Allan to leave. Their eyes were dead, but their electronic sensors observed her departure and the state that she was in now that the Committee had revealed to her a secret it had been keeping for some time. It did not understand her emotions, could not sympathise with her, but described her actions as illogical and unreasonable. To present oneself as distraught was unnecessary, an overreaction. Before dismissing her, the Committee had suggested that it might be better for her to be augmented so that she could think more clearly without her emotions clouding her judgement. She had refused, seemingly on account of an illogical preference for the prejudices of emotional

feelings. The Committee's newly-revealed secret had certainly disturbed her, but she seemed to wish to remain disturbed by it. The Committee did not understand that; it had been itself much more peaceful since its members had clambered into their giant frame, connected up to the workings and become unified. Things were better this way. There was greater efficiency, greater functionality, clearer thinking, stronger logic. What kind of intelligent being would not want to achieve such a state of superiority? Well, of course she wanted it, the Committee concluded as one. She was just being irrational. She didn't realise that the change would do her good.

Finally the Committee had given her instructions to carry out a specific duty and then it had allowed her to leave. Finally alone, its voices had divided, one voice appended to each of its living-dead organic components, and they discussed the issue of Allan amongst themselves.

'Does Doctorman Allan understand her task?' asked one of the voices.

She still has an illogical mind,' said a second.

‘A weakness she refuses to relinquish,’ added a third.

‘She is skilled and must be trusted.’

‘She now understands the threat that may destroy us all.’

A powerful beam of light suddenly discharged from somewhere high up in the vault into a receiver element at the summit of the Committee engine frame accompanied by a pulsing sound. The first speaker of the Committee instantly translated the message and repeated it to its fellows. ‘Disturbances in the city have been subdued,’ it announced the news. ‘Two police casualties occurred.’

‘The disturbance was a threat,’ said another Committee member. ‘Was it caused by the reported strangers?’

‘One stranger is under surveillance,’ answered the first. ‘He may lead us to more.’ The Committee as one chorused its agreement.

Doctorman Allan took another swig of wine and stared wearily at the surveillance screen to which was directly fed the images collected by

the Cybermat that followed the Doctor. Clouded by disturbing thoughts and drink, Allan couldn't concentrate properly on what was going on and so just watched intently. The Doctor, a tall flaxen-haired and healthy-looking man perhaps a little younger in appearance than Allan, wearing the oddest collection of clothes and some sort of vegetable pinned to his coat, was at a tram stop. A tram was waiting and he enquired of the driver as to whether that particular tram called at the stop near to Thomas Dodd's shop, but then realised with embarrassment that he could not pay for his passage on the tram and let it go. Allan was interested to hear Dodd mentioned. She knew all about his little operation and didn't approve in the slightest, but there were no legal grounds to put a stop to it. Allan wondered what the stranger would want with Dodd of all people. He didn't look like he needed an organ transplant. Perhaps Dodd knew something, she thought. He had been a spiv when he was younger, always getting arrested, always trying to run some scam or other at the expense of the already tightly-pinned economy. Perhaps it had been

he who had hidden the strangers, smuggled them into the church. Allan's head was aching and she decided to turn off the screen and just leave it to record, with the Cybermat reporting anything relevant. She leaned back in her chair, shutting her eyes, swimming in the uneasy euphoria of drunkenness. For a moment she began to fade into sleep, and instantly the images her conscious mind had sought to suppress asserted themselves. Mondas hung in space, but not alone. It held in the wake of a nebula, massive and shapeless and red with patches of pink and mauve like a huge discoloured and bleeding wound in the skin of the universe. The tiny grey ball of the planet drew nearer and nearer the livid blur, tendrils of its smoke-like substance reaching out like arms toward it. The 'arms' picked up Mondas like a football and snatched it in quickly. The little planet shook and exploded, fulfilling the Committee's prediction to her alone.

'Doctorman Allan,' the voice said again crossly.

Allan opened her eyes. Her head was splitting. 'Morning already, Sisterman Constant?'

‘I’ve recruits due in for processing,’ said Constant impatiently.

Allan groaned. ‘They won’t mind waiting.’ She picked up her still almost full glass and decided she couldn’t manage any more. ‘Here, have a glass of wine.’ She held it up to Constant.

‘No, thank you,’ Constant said.

‘Please yourself,’ replied Allan, and drank it anyway in a single swallow in the hope that it would counteract the effects of her hangover. She planted the glass on her desk. ‘Happy Holiday,’ she slurred.

Constant frowned. ‘How was your meeting with the Committee?’

‘Did they ever offer you augmentation?’ Allan asked.

Constant stuck her nose in the air. ‘We Sistermen rely on our own discipline,’ she answered haughtily.

‘How very abstemious,’ Allan mocked.

‘Did they offer you augmentation?’ asked Constant, a little surprised at the idea that someone as important as a senior Doctorman might be included in the augmentation programme but wondering on the other hand

if it would actually help Allan to get on with her work. It would certainly, at the very least, cure her drink problem.

‘Think of the benefits,’ Allan proclaimed with false enthusiasm. ‘Increased efficiency, clearer thinking, and no more endless fatigue.’

‘But surely full processing is only for the surface parties,’ inferred Constant.

Allan shook her head. ‘They’re expanding the programme.’

‘But why?’ demanded Constant, shocked.

‘That data is secure,’ Allan said in a tone that mocked the voice of the Committee. ‘Full processing for everyone.’ She looked up at Constant, observing (and slightly revelling in) her evident distress at the thought. ‘*That’s* where it’ll end.’

Constant was alarmed. ‘But what about me? I’m a selector.’

‘No one is exempt,’ Allan told her, chilling her blood. She lifted up the wine bottle, which contained by now barely more than dregs. ‘Go on, forget your vows. Have a drink.’ She winked. ‘Purely medicinal.’

‘What happens to my job if everybody gets processed?’ Constant worried. ‘What are they thinking?’

Allan smirked. ‘You’d better tell the other Sisters,’ she chuckled.

‘I will!’ Constant hooted, and she turned on her heel and marched out of the office.

Doctorman Allan started to giggle. ‘Good morning, Sisterman,’ she joked to herself, feeling in slightly better spirits, and decided to switch the spy-screen back on. The stranger was running behind a truck, shouting at the driver to stop, warning that he was losing his cargo. Finally she resolved to investigate.

‘Your cargo,’ the Doctor told the augmented truck driver as the vehicle finally pulled over a little ahead of him. ‘It’s all over the road!’

The driver opened the cab door and hopped down, marching toward the back of the truck to inspect its load. The Doctor darted ahead of him, reaching the tailgate first and slyly unbolting it just in time to avoid being seen. The open-topped trailer was filled with broken up human skeletons, some with long-

decayed vestiges of flesh and organs still clinging to them.

The driver stood in the middle of the shadow cast by the back of the truck and looked at the mess inside. 'The cargo is secure,' it said flatly.

'No it isn't!' the Doctor said like a schoolboy playing a prank on his neighbour and ran off, letting the tailgate go. The mountain of bones came clattering down on top of the truck driver, burying him. 'Thanks for your help,' the Time Lord grinned as he climbed into the cab, shut the door and drove off, heading for the T-junction and Thomas Dodd's shop.

The cab driver scrambled out from under the pile of bones, grabbed his radio and reported the incident.

Frank was still in the TARDIS, but trying not to let the madness of the place get to him. He was still bitter about Yvonne getting called up while he missed out, but he was trying not to let that get to him either. 'When will the Doctor be back?' he asked Nyssa's bottom, the only part of her that he could make out under the console.

Nyssa scrambled out with a cable in her hand that led from somewhere inside the console stem. 'I've no idea, Frank,' she said honestly, pulling up the cable. 'Hold onto this, will you?'

Frank took the end of the cable and held it while Nyssa rummaged through a box of cleverer tools than Frank had ever seen. 'I thought maybe you could come to see dad,' he told her, his voice hopeful.

'You said he asked you to find us,' Nyssa nodded, finding the tool she wanted and using it to clip something to part of the cable, repairing a break. Satisfied, she poked the inside of the stem and the cable whipped out of Frank's hand and back into its proper place, surprising him.

'I just don't know what he'll do,' the boy said, forgetting the cable and sticking to important matters.

Nyssa was only half-concentrating on what Frank was saying. She was trying to get the cabling duct to reseal itself. 'It was Yvonne's Cybermat that wrecked this, you know,' she told Frank casually.

Frank was again surprised. 'What, old Matty?' then he thought for a moment. 'Yeah. They go for cables. The energy attracts them.' The conduit suddenly started to flush with liquid sealant, which in its turn started to rapidly harden. 'Perfect,' Nyssa said, making the last few checks.

'When Yvonne went,' said Frank, going back to the reason he had come here, 'the whole block turned out to wave her off. Like a hero.'

'And you think that should've been you?'

'Course I do! Typical, that is!'

Nyssa returned the isolator switch on the console to its previous setting and the TARDIS came to life again, its soft hum filling the room once more. 'That should cheer the Doctor up,' she smiled. 'Then she turned to Frank. "The conscription," she asked him. "Does it involve any kind of processing?"

'Augmentation,' Frank nodded. 'Compulsory before going out on the surface.'

Nyssa knew what that meant. 'Then there's no way to get Yvonne back.' 'There was every reason to conclude that her processing had already started.

'I wish,' agreed Frank.

Nyssa didn't like Frank's wishes. He had been wishing for his chance to join the work crews, not realising what that would mean for him. His father had been right. They would never see Yvonne again. Not as a human being at any rate.

An alarm sounded on the console and quickly Nyssa checked it. 'Proximity alarm?' she said, surprised. 'But usually that only goes off when we're about to hit something.' She grabbed the scanner control. 'Or something's hitting us.' The scanner cover rolled up. The view of the Committee Palace Square was obscured by patterns of silver and grey, rubbery treads and shiny armour.

There were Cybermats all over the outside of the TARDIS.

II

Calling Commander Zheng

‘Heaven Bless you all!’ Sisterman Constant called out to the line of recruits passing her in the white corridor on their way to the processing unit. Young men and women shuffled tiredly along, many of them looking decidedly weak and sickly. One of them was Yvonne Hartley. Like the others in the queue she was in an operating gown, naked underneath, having been properly dressed when she’d arrived but then having undergone a pre-process examination. Yvonne wasn’t stupid; she knew she was going to be augmented. Frank had told her all about it. He was obsessed with the surface project and knew every little detail. But he didn’t quite know the full extent of the processing, and neither did Yvonne. As she padded along, the cold tiled floor stinging the

soles of her bare feet, she wondered why it had been she who was chosen and not Frank. Frank was far healthier than she was and far readier for this, and he really wanted to be part of it. Sisterman Constant had told Frank he was too young, but boys of sixteen had been selected on occasion before. There were two twin boys who had lived at the end of the Hartleys' street – they had been only just sixteen when they were called up. Yvonne suddenly remembered that those two boys both suffered from heart complaints, something to do with the way they were born, and were quite ill at the time of their conscription to the work crews. Listening to the coughs, splutters and wheezes of the people in the queue with her, it occurred to Yvonne that everyone who had been selected was sick. Why, she wondered, was the Committee choosing sick people to man their work crews? There had to be a reason. She thought she might ask Sisterman Constant when she got the chance. At the moment Constant was rather busy talking to a lady doctorman at the front of the queue, just inside the big red double doors. The

doctorman was saying that she had an errand to do and asking Constant to take charge. She promised that there was sufficient staff to handle the processing. The conversation seemed to trail off as Yvonne got near the front of the queue, so she seized what she thought was her chance. ‘Sisterman Constant,’ she wheezed. Her pills had been taken from her on arrival and not returned.

‘Yvonne?’ said Constant, sounding surprised at the sight of the girl even though she herself had selected her only last night. ‘Get back in line, dear,’ she said gently.

‘They took my clothes,’ Yvonne whined. ‘Are we going to get our uniforms soon? I wanted my dad to see before I go.’ She had on her way to the Committee Palace imagined herself in a neat jacket and skirt of dark blue, with black opaque tights, flat shoes and a cap perched on top of her brown hair at a jaunty angle, being photographed for her dad’s album, wearing her prettiest smile for him.

The lady doctorman laughed, and that upset Yvonne. ‘Your what?’ the doctorman honked rudely. ‘Oh, you’ll get your *uniform* all right.’

‘It’s just a routine check-up, Yvonne,’ Constant openly lied to the girl with a soothing voice. ‘Just stay in line. Heaven Bless you.’ And she waved her on.

‘Thank you, Sisterman,’ Yvonne coughed, shuffling back into the slowly progressing queue, still totally unaware of what was about to be done to her.

Doctorman Allan waited until Yvonne had moved up nearer the front of the queue, out of earshot. ‘There’s a sickly one,’ she said disdainfully.

‘Acute consumptive,’ nodded Constant. ‘I’d only give her another two months if she didn’t go in for processing.’

Allan glanced back at the girl and then faced Constant again. She felt sickened. She knew that the girl hadn’t even been told she had tuberculosis, less still that it was a lethal case. The Committee’s rule of not telling people how ill they are so that they won’t worry that they’re not A1 fit when the call-up papers come. ‘We live in a pit, Constant,’ she said bitterly. ‘The dark times are getting darker.’ And she walked away up the corridor, leaving Constant to bless people as they padded

silently to their destiny at the end of the white tiled corridor.

In the vault at the centre of the palace, the Committee deliberated.

‘The city is a drain on resources.’

‘We must survive.’

‘Shut down the city.’

‘All resources must be processed’

‘All threats to efficiency must be eliminated.’

The Committee processed the data it had collected from every viable resource and decided that it would be necessary for someone to take control of the situation. Someone strong, clear-minded, determined and incorruptible. Someone who knew what had to be done and would do it. Someone with whom no one would dare to argue.

‘Zheng must be summoned.’

More divided voices, more deliberation.

‘Agreed.’

‘No more dissension.’

‘Police will apprehend the stranger.’

‘If he resists, he will be destroyed.’

The Committee chorused as one, ‘Agreed.’

The information beam flashed again from above like a bolt of lightning and fed into the receiver at the frame's apex. Again the Committee assimilated and assessed the data, and an announcement followed. 'Contact has been established with Surface Commander Zheng.'

The whole Committee chorused his name, chanting it over and over like a mantra. A holographic screen floated down from the ceiling and hung before the frame. It was round and perfectly flat, held in place by a robotic arm that was welded to its back. The screen lit up and its blurry activation image resolved into sharp lines, settling into the visage of Zheng: a Cyberman, bigger than most Cybermen, with black markings on its cranial tubes and shoulder armour to mark it out as senior in rank. 'Mondas is entering the region of unstable space in advance of estimated time,' it reported. Its voice displayed the same tonal fluctuations as all Cyberman voices, as well as the same complete lack of other distinguishing features they shared. 'Request permission to implement emergency strategy immediately.'

Before the Committee could answer, an alarm sounded. One of the Committee members checked it. There was a problem in the Processing Unit. ‘Summon Doctorman Allan,’ it instructed.

Another member tried and failed. ‘Allan has left the palace,’ it reported.

‘She is no longer reliable,’ said the first voice.

‘Delay emergency strategy,’ the Committee told Zheng. ‘You will return to the city and restore order.’ The screen went blank before there could be any reply. To hear a response was unnecessary. Cybermen never disobeyed orders. Zheng would come.

‘I’ve told you before,’ Thomas Dodd was saying stubbornly to Dad Hartley as the Doctor walked into the shop and whispered something into the ears of people in the short queue for service. ‘I don’t keep a slate.’ The service users who had heard the Doctor’s news in turn whispered into the ears of those closest to them. Word spread and they bustled quickly out of the shop.

‘Oh, come on, Dodd,’ Hartley begged. ‘My arm’s a bit dodgy, but it’s easy enough to for someone with the technical know-how to fix and the rest of me’s fine.’

‘Apart from the chest box,’ snorted Dodd.

‘I’m giving you everything,’ Hartley pleaded desperately. ‘As security. You gave us credit when my wife passed away.’

Dodd raised his hands, palms out, fingers splayed in a gesture of placation. ‘Now, I never speak ill of the dead,’ he said. ‘Your Mabel was quality, and that is a fact. She did well for me.’

‘But I’m shop-soiled?’ spat Hartley. ‘I’ve a lad to feed, my wife and daughter gone. What do you say, Dodd? Please.’

Dodd shook his head. ‘I don’t give credit,’ he said firmly. ‘Not now, not ever. Not to you or anybody else.’ He spotted someone coming straight to the counter. ‘Back of the queue!’ he ordered.

The Doctor looked around the empty shop with both eyebrows raised. ‘I’m afraid your queue’s gone, Thomas,’ he announced. ‘And rather quickly too, after they heard about a

beetroot truck spilling its load a couple of streets away.'

Dodd sighed. 'So what are you after now, Doctor?'

The Doctor was about to answer, but the other man in the shop interrupted. 'Doctor? The Doctor who's a friend of young Nyssa?'

'Yes,' the Doctor nodded. 'You must be Mr Hartley. You were very kind to her.'

'She did a grand job on my chest-box!' Dad Hartley said proudly. 'She'd make a good doctor, too.'

'Really,' the Doctor half-smiled.

'They're digging up the graveyards, you know,' Hartley continued glumly. 'I'm glad I didn't put my wife in there.' And he plodded sadly past to the exit.

The Doctor turned to Dodd. 'Is he all right?'

'Just on the scrounge,' Dodd sniffed. 'Your riot didn't go too well by all accounts.'

'No,' the Doctor agreed with visible disappointment. 'But I don't give up easily. That wasn't really a beetroot truck I told everyone about. The contents of the graveyard are now scattered right up the high street for everyone to see!' Dodd looked

worried, but the Doctor smiled. ‘Don’t worry,’ he said. ‘I dumped the truck around the corner. Nothing will lead back here.’ Dodd scowled at him. ‘Doctor,’ he asked pointedly. ‘What do you want?’

The alarm was still shrieking wildly and the Cybermats still blotting out the scanner. Frank was worried. ‘They’re all over,’ he said in panic. ‘They’re bound to find a crack soon and dig their way in. They never give up.’

Nyssa was watching the screen. ‘The TARDIS was built to withstand far greater pressure than a swarm of Cybermats,’ she said.

‘But we can’t get out either,’ Frank protested.

That was true. And it was a worry. ‘Frank,’ asked Nyssa. ‘Did you shut the outer door when you came in?’

‘I don’t remember,’ Frank gibbered. He obviously hadn’t. The main inner doors of the TARDIS suddenly shook and the seam between them widened to almost a quarter of an inch.

Processing... Please Wait

Thomas Dodd could hardly believe what he was hearing. 'The Committee Palace?' he gawked. 'You must be joking.'

The Doctor was certainly not joking about wanting to break into the palace. 'I wish I were,' he retorted. 'I could do with a good laugh.'

'But it's a fortress!' Dodd blustered. 'With massive gates!'

'Gates are for opening,' the Doctor said flatly. 'And I need to know how far they've gone.'

'Who?'

'Your competition. The Committee.' The Doctor slipped around to Dodd's side of the counter. 'And while we're on the subject of

spare parts,' he said coolly, marching through the door to the back of the shop.

'That's private!' Dodd barked, charging after him. 'Come out of there!'

The Doctor wouldn't heed his protests, instead moving further into the storeroom and examining the shelves. They were full of specially sealed transparent polymer bags, each bag containing a "donation" from one of Dodd's past clients. There were livers, kidneys, corneas, blood, plasma, lung tissue and skin among other things. 'Oh dear oh dear, 'Thomas,' the Doctor chided. 'I thought you'd have better facilities for storage than this.'

Dodd shrugged. 'They're all vacuum-packed for freshness. The real perishables are in the cold store. Full range of bodily organs and limbs, all sizes and colours.'

'Mothers frighten their children to sleep with stories about people like you,' the Doctor said viciously.

'It's *business*,' Dodd growled. 'But demand's on the slide. People – even people with terminal injuries and blood dripping all over

the floor – these days all they want is titanium and plastic! They think it'll last,' he snorted.

'It's durable,' the Doctor pontificated.

'I think it's just plain ugly,' Dodd said. 'Some people have got so much in them that it drives them mad, so they have their emotions surgically removed too! We all want immortality, don't we? But with a chrome finish?'

By now the Doctor had pulled open the huge door of the walk-in freezer at the end of the storeroom and was standing inside. 'This cold store needs defrosting,' he muttered.

'Of course, what I need is some new stock,' Dodd said quietly. 'And here you are. It's too good an opportunity to waste.' And he slammed the freezer door and locked it. He didn't notice the black-liveried Cybermat, intent on its orders to observe the Doctor, whizzing past his legs and diving into the freezer just in time.

Nyssa was thinking as quickly as she could, and the crack in the doors was widening, silvery shapes becoming visible inside the tiny

gap. 'Shut the power off!' shouted Frank. 'It's the energy they want! Shut it off!'

Nyssa reached for the isolator failsafe again, and her arm brushed against the dead lump of Matty, abandoned on the console, and knocked it down with a clatter. She looked at it for a moment. 'Of course!' she exclaimed, her eyes widening with delight. 'This one died from absorbing too much. If they want the energy, let's give it to them!'

'What?' screeched Frank.

'It'll burn them out,' Nyssa said quickly, operating controls to divert raw power from the centre column to the outer shell. 'That's what killed Matty.'

Frank got it. 'Oh,' he nodded, seeing the sense in the suggestion. 'Like the cheeser.'

Nyssa threw a switch. There was a flash, the TARDIS doors slammed themselves shut, and the Cybermats on the scanner fell off onto the ground, blackened and smoking. 'There!' Nyssa said triumphantly.

Frank was genuinely impressed. 'It worked! Amazing!'

'Not really amazing,' Nyssa smiled. 'But worryingly satisfying. Let's not wait for the

Doctor. I'll get some food now and then we can go and find your poor father.' She left him to wait, hurrying into the corridor to find the food machine and whatever other resources she could scavenge from. Frank watched her go, thinking about how rude he had been to her at home. He would find time to apologise for that soon. Nyssa was pretty good really, for a girl.

Yvonne had nearly fainted when she'd entered the processing unit. The machines were incredible, far in advance of anything she'd ever seen. There were huge screens on the walls, like televisions but bigger and completely flat with full colour displays. There were computerised images of patients on them with areas of the body divided up into squares of colour that flashed to indicate that section's particular state of health, or its particular need. The giant televisions were wired up to massive machines below that Yvonne just couldn't describe. She'd never seen anything like them. White-coated staff members gathered around the machines,

some moving from one to another with clipboards, all making very busy. The room was absolutely crammed with high-tech trolleys, each festooned with more indescribable technology and each laden with a man or woman in a stupefied state. Then someone had guided her away from the queue, as if she were priority, and taken her to a trolley at the end of the room, where she had seen the alcoves containing fully-processed surface crewmen, all dormant and awaiting activation. That had started her coughing and she'd come close to blacking out, but someone had made her swallow a pill and she'd relaxed. Then the nurse, a male nurse, had ripped her gown off, leaving her standing naked. She was embarrassed, her face reddening. She tried to cover up with her hands and arms but someone pulled them back to her sides and ordered her to keep still. She stood there, almost in tears, as the men opened a hatch in the wall and someone drove her toward it. The hatch was circular and beyond it there lay a sort of bed, narrow, blue and comfortable-looking. A man lifted Yvonne's tiny naked body in his arms as the

bed slid out of the hole with a buzz, laid her down and slid it back in again. Then the hatch was closed and Yvonne was alone. She stared up at the curved ceiling, if it could be called that, of the tube in which she lay. It was featureless. Suddenly a wide beam of light shot out from somewhere and ran down her whole body. She was scared, unsure of what was happening. Then she relaxed as she heard the hatch being opened, and the bed buzzed out. She noticed that she was leaving the tube head-first. She had been put *into* the tube head-first and had felt no sensation of being turned around, and so she thought she ought to leave feet-first. But as she managed to sit up she realised she was not in the room she had been in before. She had come out the other side. This room was much smaller than the huge operating theatre. It had only one television screen linked to one of the other machines and no trolleys, just a bed with mechanical arms sprouting from it. It was manned by two surface crewmen. What were they doing here? Surely they weren't doctors. They didn't even look human anymore. They had cloth masks on covering their whole

heads, front, back and sides, and a kind of metal skullcap upon which was mounted a kind of powerful lamp, apparently held in place by curved pipes that met the lamp at one end and the ear-area of the head at the other. Their whole bodies were covered in a plasticky substance like the Committee police wore, and Yvonne could see the wires penetrating their skin underneath. They had huge chest boxes, much bigger than her dad's, with thick tubes sprouting from them and arcing over the shoulder armour to connect up somewhere else. 'What's going on?' Yvonne croaked. 'I don't want to do this anymore. I want to go home. I want my dad.'

'Come to us,' said one of the surface crewmen. Something had been done to its voice, the life sucked out of it like the police, but somehow this voice was even less human than that. 'We are the future.'

Yvonne froze. What did "we are the future" mean? Surely they didn't mean *her* future, that Yvonne Louise Hartley was to end up exactly like these two *things*. She started to cry. 'I want to go home!' she wailed.

The crewman that had spoken marched toward her and picked her up as easily as if she had been a child's doll. As it carried her to the bed, the other crewman pressed a switch. The robotic arms around the bed sprang up, and Yvonne could see that each arm was mounted with an item of equipment. There were scalpels, injection needles... *an electric saw*. It was then that Yvonne was finally overwhelmed, and she blacked out.

The Doctor was still in the freezer, pacing up and down to keep warm. 'Ambient temperature minus eight degrees,' he estimated, hugging himself. 'I shall never be facetious about strawberry Mivvi again!' He heard an electronic squeak and looked down to find the little black Cybermat at his feet. It seemed sluggish, its movements jerky and spasmodic. The cold was obviously near the stage of shutting it down. Par for the course with Cybermen and their appendages. At certain temperatures they all switched off unless their orders had included cold defence in the instance that the temperature might be

used against them, in which case later types of Cybermen would include an internal thermal generator system. But not this early in their parody of evolution. The Cybermat was far less dangerous now, having not anticipated the cold as it had chased the Doctor, and he stooped to pick it up. 'Let's see how sensitive your defences really are,' he said to it. 'Before whoever sent you after me comes round to collect you.'

But that was already in progress. Committee policemen barged through the door of Thomas Dodd's shop, breaking the glass, and marched to the counter. 'Thomas Dodd,' one of them announced, 'you are harbouring a stranger.'

'You took your time,' said Dodd, playing for some time of his own. 'He put up quite a struggle, you know.'

'Where is he?' demanded the policeman.

'He escaped,' Dodd lied. 'Out the back door.'

The two policemen seemed not to believe his story. 'Search,' one of them said. 'The cold storage area will be first.' Of course he knew

that the Doctor was there because that had been the last place the Cybermat had registered before its systems had cut out. Both policemen marched through to the back of the shop, ignoring Dodd's protests. They reached the door of the freezer. It was shut fast and locked. 'Open this door,' one of them ordered.

'No,' Dodd answered defiantly. 'You can leave that alone.'

The policeman looked to its colleague. 'Open it.' The other policeman simply used its super-strong cybernetic arms and wrenched the door off its hinges.

The Doctor stopped blowing on the Cybermat and looked up with a rather embarrassed grin. 'How d'you do,' he said cheerfully. 'I'm the, er, stranger. So, take me to your Cyber-Leader, as it were.'

'Destroy him,' ordered a policeman.

'Sorry!' said the Doctor. 'Not yet!' and he flung the slightly warmed-up Cybermat right at the chest unit of one of the policemen. Confused, the Cybermat stuck itself fast to the unit and started to drain it like a greedy baby suckling its mother's breast. The unit

couldn't take it and packed up, and the policeman clattered to the ground. By the time Dodd and the other policeman had realised what was happening, the Doctor had escaped via the broken front door of the shop.

The Doctor rushed to the tram stop, but there were no trams and he still didn't have any money. He noticed the police horse that must have carried the two who attacked Dodd's shop at the corner of the junction, on the opposite side of the road. He crossed over to examine the mechanised beast, feeling sad because it probably didn't understand what had happened to it. It whinnied as he approached. 'What's the matter?' he asked it with a slight smile. 'Bridle too tight? Implants biting into your head and your limbs. You have a hard life.' He followed the tubes from its face-bag to the brace on its neck and thence to the armoured bridle that virtually encased its back. 'The whips are cruel. The feed's old and stale, the stable floor's hard under hoof.' He found clasps and started to fiddle with them. 'But if we get this bridle off

you then you can sleep properly, and dream. Dream like a *real* horse. Wild, galloping where the ground's soft between the blue sky and the sweet blowing grass.' If he had been able to detach the bridle the horse would have died, and that would have been the kindest thing for it, but he wasn't quick enough. The policeman came from Dodd's shop in pursuit and grabbed his shoulder, wrenching him away. The Doctor wrestled futilely, trying to escape.

'Stand away from the prisoner!' a woman's voice ordered. 'I'm taking charge of him.'

'The Committee instructed us to...'

The woman refused to be argued with. 'I have powers to requisition prisoners for medical research,' she told the policeman. 'Take him to my unit, now.'

'I'm much obliged to you,' the Doctor panted as he was allowed to stand up.

The woman ignored him. 'Bring Dodd, too, and have his filthy stock burnt.' She smirked at the policeman. 'Smile, Captain! It's a holiday.'

The End of the World

Frank Hartley closed the door of the flat behind himself and Nyssa. 'Dad!' he called out. 'I'm back. I've got Nyssa with me.' He walked through to the kitchen, where he knew his dad would be. And there he was, just putting the kettle on.

He finished and went through to the living room. 'What d'you think of the tree?' he asked cheerfully, gesturing with his good arm toward the scruffy replica tree, now hung with tinsel and baubles and mounted with the silvery star. 'Bit more tinsel maybe?' He smiled at Nyssa as Frank led her in. 'Happy Holiday, Nyssa.'

'And to you,' Nyssa smiled warmly back. 'I brought some provisions,' she said, and handed a plastic bag to Hartley.

Hartley took the bag gratefully. He didn't like accepting charity, but pride for once would have to wait, the Hartley's circumstances being so dire. 'That's very kind,' he said. 'I met your friend. Seems like an amiable chap. He was at Dodd's.'

Frank bristled at the mention of Thomas Dodd's name. He had every reason to hate that man and had more than once forbidden his father to see him. 'What were you doing there?' he demanded angrily.

'Um, can't remember,' Hartley covered up, turning the television on.

'Who's Dodd?' asked Nyssa.

'Bad news,' Frank spat.

Hartley tried to steer their concentration off the Dodd matter. 'What's that?' he said, pointing to the picture on the tiny television screen.

'Dunno,' said Frank, looking at the figure in a plastic suit and cloth mask. 'Turn the volume up.'

Dad Hartley twisted the knob and the announcer's voice became clear. '...can finally show you these outfits, designed to protect

courageous workers from the extreme freezing conditions out on the surface.'

'The surface?' yelled Frank, surprised. 'But we're not on the surface yet.'

The announcer continued as a picture of a brown-haired woman in a suit replaced the one of the masked figure. 'Doctorman Christine Allan, who designed the suits, is seen here receiving congratulations from...'

'Blimey,' Dad Hartley said as he observed the giant figures flanking the tiny woman. 'Look at those poor beggars. Talk about extremes! Poor Vonnie won't like wearing that lot.'

Nyssa was watching the screen too, and though they were a far cry from what she knew, feared and hated, she could tell at a glance what they were. 'Those aren't protective suits,' she breathed. 'They're Cybermen.'

'They're what?' asked Frank, not knowing the word.

The kettle whistled, an instant distraction to any member of the Hartley family. Dad Hartley got up to get it, but suddenly all the lights went out and the television went off.

With no sky to provide daylight and the floodlamps in the streets shut off too, it was as black as midnight in the middle of the day. Nyssa held still, worried that if she moved she might bump into something. ‘What’s happened?’

‘Power cut,’ groaned Dad. ‘Just when I’d got the Holiday lights up, too.’

The cut had affected the processing unit too, and the computers linked to the alcoves containing Cybermen flickered and cut out. There were murmurs of panic among the staff, but Sisterman Constant refused to give into it. ‘Switch to the emergency backup generators,’ she called, knowing there would be a technician within reaching distance of the switch. There was a click and everything came back on. ‘Thank Heaven for that,’ Constant said.

‘Sister,’ a nurse said urgently. ‘It’s cut out in mid-programming.’

The evacuation alarm sounded. People started moving. Constant raised her voice. ‘No one leaves!’ she ordered loudly. ‘No one! Keep the recruits restrained.’ She could see that, with

their programming incomplete, the newborn Cybermen were confused. There was a small army of them lined up in the Final Stage ward, cables connected to the cranial caps and via them to the computerised brains themselves, but now feeding no programming data, installing no set tasks and functions. The Cybermen seemed agitated. 'What are my tasks?' they chorused in unison. 'I do not know my tasks.'

Constant looked around in the dim emergency lighting and hoped that Doctorman Allan would return soon, and be sober enough to do something useful. Another voice added itself to the distraught buzz of the Cybermen, this one deeper and more mechanical.

The voice of the Committee.

The lights all over the streets were going out as the Doctor and Dodd were marched along them by a policeman toward the palace. There was a sudden loud rumble, worse than thunder a hundred times over, and the ground shook. Dodd panicked. 'What was that?'

‘Did you feel the air pressure drop?’ asked the Doctor, seeming somewhat less perturbed than Dodd. Perhaps he was doing a good job of hiding it.

‘I thought the roof was caving in,’ Dodd moaned, rubbing his recently-popped ears.

‘Maybe it will do,’ said the Doctor. He shouted to the policeman. ‘What is it, Constable? Are we under bombardment?’

‘Keep moving,’ the policeman said simply, ignoring the question. The information was unknown and thus far of no value. It had no pertinence to his task.

The lights were going out one by one. ‘It’s too dark to see!’ whined Dodd.

There was another loud crash and a shake, like a mini-earthquake. The Doctor looked back down the corridor. ‘That was way to the north,’ he observed darkly as they drew up to the palace.

The huge gates swung open. ‘You will proceed inside,’ ordered the Constable.

‘I’m not going in there!’ shouted Dodd.

The policeman whipped him. ‘Move on,’ it ordered.

Alarms were ringing from inside, and an eerie mechanical voice from deep down the corridor seemed to sing in a cold, empty, grotesque way along with them. Outside, police whipped horses that were going wildly out of control but the horses just wouldn't calm, their hooves kicking out in every direction, the air filling with their neighing and whinnying noise. There was another quake as they passed through the gates and were bathed in dim red light. 'Sounds like your society's in its death throes,' the Doctor told Dodd.

'More like the end of the world,' Dodd replied, not comprehending the Doctor's own words but mirroring his sentiment.

'You could be right,' said the Doctor. 'Maybe I was wrong. Maybe Mondas doesn't have a future after all.' And he stepped inside, wanting to believe that Mondas was to die, here and now, in the heart of the nebula. Better that than the alternative.

The policeman who had been escorting the Doctor and Dodd was trying to calm a horse that had almost come between them. The beast kicked out with its front hooves and

flung the constable down onto the hard ground. ‘Quick!’ the Doctor shouted to Dodd. ‘While he’s on the ground – *run!*’ And he ran into the corridor.

‘Not that way!’ howled Dodd, turning back toward the city.

The Doctor grabbed his wrist and pulled him inside. ‘Do you think you’re better off on the streets?’ he demanded, but didn’t wait for an answer. The question was rhetorical anyway.

Confusion

The Committee burred and chuntered incoherently over the loudspeaker, and it was hard to tell whether it was deliberating or simply gabbling. In the processing ward, the new Cybermen stood in a rank, neat and straight and ordered, all the same height and build, all wearing the same silvery semi-translucent suits, the same cloth face masks, the same skullcaps, and the same clamps on their limbs and boxes on their chests. They stood like a military inspection parade, ready for action, but unready. Their physical processing had been completed, but their programming had not. They had no data, no instructions, and no idea what to do. They wanted to know what to do so that they could do it at once, but there was simply no input

from the computers. Now they had been disconnected from the computers and had no main source of input. They decided instead to seek it from Sisterman Constant.

One of the Cybermen turned its face to her. It was too hard to say whether it looked at her or not, as its human eyes, if they still existed in there at all, were now covered with dark circles of wire mesh. 'We have tasks to perform,' the Cyberman said. 'What are they?' Its voice was completely mechanised now, the vocal folds of the human being it used to be now completely removed and the amplifier and speaker in the chest unit now wired up to the speech centres of its computerised brain. It still opened its mouth to speak, lips not forming the words but its mouth holding open until what was to be said had been said. The words no longer came through the mouth, but it seemed that opening and closing it in a parody of speech-synchronicity had been one of the tiny few human qualities the brain conditioning had been unable to erase. It was kind of autonomous reflex that simply could not be quelled.

The Sisterman had been listening to the Cyberman asking this question for some time now, and she was slowly coming to terms with the fact that it would not allow itself to be ignored. 'You must stay here,' she told it slowly, hoping that its comprehension program had not been among those interrupted by the power cut. 'Until full power is restored.'

The Cyberman kept its face turned toward her, as if its blank eyes were somehow staring at her, sizing her up in some way or wondering whether she had the authority to give it tasks. Constant was feeling very uncomfortable, and so was relieved when Doctorman Allan appeared on the ward, back from her "errand" in the city. 'Sisterman Constant,' she called as she dashed in. 'What's happening?'

'Thank goodness you're here, Doctorman,' the Sister gushed.

'The city's in darkness,' Allan told her colleague. 'There have been explosions.' She observed the rank of Cybermen, aware that all fully processed subjects are put straight to

work and therefore should not just be lined up on the ward. 'Why are these recruits here?'

'Our tasks must be allocated,' the Cyberman that had spoken earlier explained to her on the Sisterman's behalf.

Allan was surprised. 'What?'

'The power went down in the middle of their programming,' Constant elaborated. 'We've been trying to contain them until we can get full power back and link them up to the computers to finish the job, but I think one might have wandered off. They don't understand.'

'They wouldn't,' sighed Allan. 'They're barely out of processing.'

The Cybermen had been listening to the conversation. 'We do understand,' said their spokesman.

Allan rounded on it. 'Do you?'

'We are the future,' the Cyberman said.

'Yes?'

'We have tasks to perform. What are they?'

'You must wait. Your programming is incomplete. Waiting is your current task.'

The Cyberman seemed to consider this for a moment, but then somehow it recognised

Doctorman Allan's authority. 'We will wait,' it agreed.

'Good,' nodded Allan. At least the part of their programming that gave them recognition of their programmers had got through, which meant they knew who she was and in the absence of extenuating circumstances would obey her. But the advent of such extenuating circumstances was imminent. Allan turned back to Constant. 'What about the Committee?' she asked urgently. 'Without power they'll die.'

Constant looked up. She hadn't noticed until now that the Committee was no longer babbling, and that everything was in fact strangely quiet. 'They're not making a sound,' she observed worriedly. 'Everyone else has evacuated,' she told Allan. 'There's no word from the crews on the surface and we can't leave here.'

'Then the Committee's in trouble,' Allan concluded.

Something registered for the Cybermen. That was something that *had* been programmed into them. There was no lack of comprehension in their priority orders, no

matter what else might confuse them. 'Our first imperative is to protect the Committee,' the Cyber-spokesman announced. 'Where is the Committee? We must protect it.'

Allan rounded once again on the giant, small as she was, unfazed by it. 'I have already told you, your task is to wait.'

'We have waited,' the Cyberman countered with utter simplicity. 'If you threaten the Committee, we must destroy you.' It stepped out of line, closer to Doctorman Allan, towering over her.

There was no one in the corridors. There was no one in the laboratories, no one in the offices, no one in the wards and no one on guard. There were no doctors, no nurses and no patients except for one or two on trolleys, abandoned at the moment of crisis and obviously dead. The Doctor picked his way through the mess of trolleys and bits of equipment, Thomas Dodd following close behind, and searched for signs of life. 'The whole place is deserted,' Dodd observed, puzzled as to why that should be. The one

place where the senior officials would take shelter in a crisis should not be empty at a time like this.

‘Getting nippy, too,’ the Doctor said with a slight shiver. They had come out of the corridor now, out of the white tile and strip lighting into what looked like a disused care ward. Some of the old architecture was still visible beyond the technological adaptations and there were two long vertical windows which had frosted up. ‘This was probably a fine palace once,’ the Doctor pondered with some sadness. ‘Before it crumbled into baroque decay.’

‘I know it had a famous wine cellar,’ Dodd replied flippantly, confirming the Doctor’s suspicion that his underground tunnels had an outlet here. ‘I could do with a drink right now.’ He blew out and formed vapour in the air as he thought about the earthquakes. ‘Are we under attack, d’you think?’ He recalled being shown *Battle From Above the Sky* on a home projector when he was a child, his father being a film buff and sad that the Roxy had closed down. Edward Dodd had talked fondly of how he used to take his girlfriend

Sally there when he was a young man, long before he met 'Thomas's mother. He'd also dropped hints about the plans to get people up on the surface back in the early days, and even claimed at one point that crewmen had actually gone up, but that all the film of it had been destroyed because of some disaster or other and all who had seen the footage had been paid a princely sum by the Committee to sign a legal document promising never to mention it to anyone. Of course, by the time he'd told Thomas about it he was old and losing his marbles, and no one corroborated his story. Edward had said that it was the reason why he collected films. He hoped that one day he would stumble across a newsreel that had been missed in the cover-up and by way of it be able to prove his story. All he ever got were a few corny old movies, though, and he had put them on his projector for evenings of family entertainment. 'Thomas, being young and impressionable then, had been terrified by the thought of invaders breaking through the roof, but as he'd got older he'd become cynical and lost his imagination, and so dismissed the idea as

irrational. Now, however, he was starting to wonder if there really were giant spaceships blasting the roof with their ray guns and trying to break through to invade Mondas. He wasn't at all prepared for the answer to his question.

'Worse,' said the Doctor. 'The outside is getting in. The energy fields of the local nebula are playing merry hell with the integrity of the city's sealed biosphere.'

Dodd wasn't sure what all of that codswallop meant, but the upshot was simple enough to grasp. 'So we're safer in here, then?'

The Doctor still couldn't give Dodd an answer that made him feel comfortable. 'That rather depends on what's in here with us,' he said darkly. He opened a sliding door by hand in the absence of power and stepped out into a passageway, dark and gloomy, musty in smell, and obviously long out of use. The walls were wallpapered, but the paper was damp and mouldy, peeling in some places and torn in others. A few pictures hung on the walls, also ruined by cold and damp, and there were large wooden double doors at the end, flanked on either side by golden statues of

serious-looking men in old costume, doors that would have looked important had they not been rotten and virtually hanging off their hinges. Dodd made straight for the statues and examined them. 'D'you reckon these are solid gold?' he asked with a glint in his eye, probably wondering how much he might be able to sell them for if he could sneak out with them somehow. There honestly wasn't much chance of that.

'Probably just finished with gold leaf,' the Doctor sighed, rubbing one of the statues. A black patch appeared on the shoulder where he had rubbed and small particles of gold dust flaked off onto his fingers.

'What about the market value?' Dodd suggested, keeping his priorities fixed as they were always fixed.

'What market?' the Doctor scoffed, rubbing furiously to get himself a palm full of the glittery dust. 'This is just about the last place in the universe I'd expect to find very much gold.' He remembered that gold was inimical to Cybermen, being soft and non-corrodible, it could clog up the mechanisms of their respiratory apparatus and cause it to shut

down. 'It could still be a prudent investment, though.' He continued rubbing. While he did so, he decided to find out a little bit more about this place. 'So who were these two?' he indicated the statues, as they must be statues of someone.

'Last independent rulers we had before the Committee, I think,' shrugged Dodd. 'I'm no historian.'

'Do you know what happened to them?'

'The chop, of course. At the end of the revolution.'

The Doctor realised that a kind of parody of the Russian Revolution had taken place on Mondas some long time ago, hence the communist society, and it had been by means of this revolution that the Committee had taken power. 'And where are the champions of the proletariat? I want to see this Committee for myself.'

'No one sees the Committee,' said Dodd, completely failing to notice that he was simply repeating something that had been drilled into him since his childhood.

'Really?' the Doctor was surprised. 'I wonder why.' He heard footsteps, the door he had

opened earlier sliding about again. 'Hide!' he hissed and dived behind a statue. Dodd quickly ducked behind the other.

A Cyberman entered the passage, and as the Doctor peered over the blackened shoulder of his statue he felt the blood run cold in his veins. As he watched, he noticed something that wasn't quite right: the Cyberman was not marching but staggering. It seemed confused, waving its arms around. It was *rogue*. This happened to Cybermen sometimes. The computer systems in their brains failed for some reason and they went mad. Usually they just became frantic, killing everything that came near, screaming wildly. But this one was nothing like that. Its voice was soft, like a child's, and it didn't seem capable of killing anyone. 'What are my tasks?' it buzzed. 'Clarify my directives.'

'What the hell is that thing?' Dodd asked in disgust. 'It's horrible.'

The Doctor waved to silence him, worried that they would be discovered. But it was too late. The Cyberman had heard. It clattered up to the statues, stood between them and

looked at Dodd, and then at the Doctor. 'You,' it said. 'What are my tasks?'

The Doctor stepped out from his hiding place and Dodd joined him. 'Your tasks?' he asked the creature. 'Don't you know?'

'You must tell me,' the Cyberman said, almost asking nicely, its voice somehow plaintive. 'I must know.' It leaned to look at Dodd, but he flinched away from it.

'What purpose were you created for?' asked the Doctor, hoping that it didn't have sufficient information to tell it that intruders might be a threat.

The Cyberman stammered. 'I... I... do... not know.'

Dodd was shaking, staring at it, his skin paler than was usual for him. 'Horrible thing,' he shivered. 'Horrible cloth face.'

'Am I horrible?' the Cyberman asked.

'Bloody horrible,' Dodd told it cruelly.

The Cyberman seemed troubled. 'I did not know this.'

The Doctor scowled at Dodd. 'Was that necessary?'

'Look at it,' hissed Dodd. 'All spare parts. All implants. There's nothing human left.'

The Doctor wondered if there might be something human left – inside. ‘Who *were* you?’ he asked the Cyberman. ‘Do you remember? Do you know your name?’

‘I am...’ the Cyberman buzzed. ‘I... I am...’

‘Yes?’ the Doctor prompted.

‘Dad must see my uniform,’ it said suddenly, catching the Doctor by surprise. ‘Take a photograph.’ And it turned around and walked away, this time somehow more resolute, as if new information, or the sudden recollection of old, had given it a purpose.

The Doctor watched it go. ‘Appalling waste,’ he said sadly.

‘Is that what they do in here?’ Dodd breathed.

‘Even *you’re* shocked, Thomas,’ the Doctor observed. ‘Excellent.’

‘It was disgusting,’ Dodd said, still staring after it. ‘It stank of antiseptic.’

‘They’ve always done that,’ the Doctor smirked, noticing that some things never changed, even for the Cybermen.

Dodd went on. ‘And was it male or female? I couldn’t even tell!’

The Doctor thought about it. He had noticed a cable hanging from something attached to the Cyberman's cranial cap. 'It was confused, and still cabled up, I think,' he muttered to himself. 'Fresh from processing? Incomplete, perhaps?'

Dodd stared at him incredulously. 'How do you know so much about it?'

'It's your destiny, Thomas,' the Doctor answered. 'The future of everyone on this planet who survives the crisis. Call it a Cyberman, and remember that name.'

The Two Doctormen

White everywhere. White, where there had only been grey. A section of the grey stone sky was obscured behind a cloud of white vapour, that cloud growing and creeping along the rock, and from it poured out a mass of white particles, floating down slowly to the ground, glittering. The particles spread out too, carried on a wind the like of which no one on Mondas was old enough to remember seeing, and coated the grey streets in a thick sheet of white that shone despite the darkness. As Nyssa watched, she realised that it could not be *total* darkness outside, even though the floodlamps were no longer working, and also that the gale would have to come from somewhere, as would the white particles of something she recognised

perfectly well. 'It's snowing,' she murmured as she stood on the doorstep, the front door still wide open.

Dad Hartley had heard of snow, but he had never seen it. His great grandfather had owned a book that had become a family heirloom and it had been passed down from generation to generation. The book was called "*WEATHER*", and it was a children's educational book from school. All of the Hartleys had read it many times. They knew what it was about and what it meant, how it told of the old times before people withdrew below the ground, but they had never truly experienced it. 'Snow?' Hartley said, surprised. 'But that's weather. We don't have weather anymore, Nyssa.' He stepped closer to the doorway and looked out. Snow was falling everywhere, whirling on the wind and cascading from the breach in the roof. 'That's what they'd have called a blizzard in the Old Days,' he recalled from his book. 'It's beautiful, isn't it? Just in time for the Holiday.' But to Nyssa it was anything but beautiful. It was deadly, a catastrophe of fantastic, perhaps extinction-level proportions.

‘All the tiny flakes,’ Dad Hartley continued with fascination. ‘Catching in the torchlight.’ Nyssa realised the extra light was coming from the Hartleys’ hand-torch.

‘You’re wasting the batteries, Dad,’ Frank warned. ‘Come inside. You’ll both freeze to death standing there.’

Hartley and Nyssa stepped back inside and Frank closed the door. Nyssa was thinking about the Doctor again, wondering if perhaps he could do something. ‘I should go,’ she said. ‘I’ve got to find the Doctor.’

‘You can’t go out in *that*,’ Dad Hartley blustered, pointing back in the direction of the door to indicate the snow outside. ‘It’s getting worse.’

‘That’s why I’ve got to go now,’ replied Nyssa stridently. ‘Soon the streets could be impassable.’

Frank decided not to argue with her. ‘I’ll find you a coat,’ he said and made for the hall. His mother had possessed some good coats, and no one in the household had been able to find the heart to throw them away.

‘You’re mad,’ Dad said, shaking his head in despair of them both. ‘The pair of you. I’m going to stay here and put the kettle on.’

‘Er, Dad,’ Frank interjected.

‘Oh, right,’ Dad realised glumly, looking around the darkened flat. ‘No power, no tea. I reckon our Vonnie’s better off in barracks.’ Still carrying the torch, he plodded to the window to look at the snow again. He had no idea what fate his daughter had suffered.

Doctorman Allan was still wrangling with the Cybermen. They had vetoed her authority and changed their position, lining up in front of the exit to form a barricade. ‘You must let us out!’ Allan was shouting at them all. ‘We’ve got to get to the Committee chamber.’

‘We are protecting the Committee,’ the Cyber-spokesman answered, refusing to be persuaded.

‘You’re nowhere near the Committee!’ snapped Sisterman Constant, hoping that by backing Allan she might herself be able to get out of the processing ward. Already the dead bodies on various trolleys and tables were

starting to stink and it was making her feel queasy.

‘Displays of emotional weakness are impractical,’ the Cyberman told her as it observed her outburst.

Allan suddenly thought of something. ‘The Cybermen were programmed to protect the Committee at any cost, to investigate every potential threat and liquidate them as efficiently as possible. Perhaps she could use their logic against them. ‘The Committee will die if we don’t get to it,’ she told the Cyberman. She knew that if the Cyberman thought for one second that holding her and Constant here might cause the Committee’s death then it would surely also believe that letting them go would save it. ‘And the city, too,’ she added. ‘I want to try to get the generators restarted, get full power back on.’ It worked. ‘Agreed,’ the Cyberman said. ‘One of us will escort you.’

‘You don’t trust me?’ Allan asked.

‘Don’t argue, Doctorman,’ Constant pleaded urgently. She lowered her voice. ‘I’ll try and keep the others busy.’

Allan nodded. 'Be careful, Constant,' she said, and turned to face the door. The Cybermen had stepped clear all except one, her escort.

'Heaven Bless you,' Constant said and took off her scarf, handing it to Allan. 'Put this on. And hurry, before we all freeze to death.'

Dodd pulled another sliding door aside and looked into the gloomy, empty cubicle beyond it. 'Nothing in here,' he grumbled, turning back to the corridor. 'I think we're lost.'

The Doctor had another door open, and there was something in the room behind this one. 'You'd better come and look at this, Thomas,' he said.

Dodd crossed the corridor to the Doctor's side, shivering. It was getting colder, colder than he had ever known it to be. He looked into the doorway being held open for him, at the huge racks with hangers holding what might have been a few hundred suits of plastic with metal braces on the arm and leg joints and apertures in the chest and neck areas. Dodd looked disgusted. 'What are those?'

‘Body-containment suits for Cybermen,’ the Doctor answered. ‘All ready for processing on an industrial scale. Things are more advanced than I expected.’ He sounded worried.

Dodd didn’t care about that. He’d never even heard the word Cybermen until the Doctor had said it to him and then given him a brief summary of what it implied. He was terrified of the idea that even he himself could end up like that walking, talking cut-and-shut cadaver they had met earlier. All this was making him angry, and now it boiled over. ‘See?’ he growled. ‘See what State funding does? Well, that’s me out of business! I’ll see you later, Doctor!’ and he marched off down the corridor, not caring whether or not he would ever see the Doctor again.

‘Thomas, come back,’ the Doctor called.

‘No,’ Dodd snorted, hunching his shoulders and shoving his hands into his pockets. ‘I’ve had enough. I’m going home away from this... place!’ He regretted being unable to find a suitable adjective to explain his disgust in his current surroundings. He almost jumped out of his skin, and quickly backtracked toward the Doctor when a door opened down the

passage in front of him and another of those walking-dead things appeared, this one in the company of Doctorman Allan. For all its look it could have been the same one they saw earlier. Were all the crewmen – or Cybermen, or whatever they were – exactly alike?

‘Which way are the generators?’ the Cyberman was asking Allan. Its voice was a fluting mechanical buzz like that of the previous one, but somehow more solid, less gentle.

Allan tried a tactic. ‘You now have a new task,’ she told it. ‘You will stay here and guard this door to ensure the security of my work. I will carry out my task more efficiently if I work alone.’

‘I was ordered to escort you,’ the Cyberman insisted, grabbing her wrist. Though it had bare human hands its grip was incredibly strong and Allan yelped in pain.

‘Let go at once!’ Allan shrieked.

‘I must escort you,’ the Cyberman said. It could almost have been called stubborn. Allan wriggled and struggled to get free, but she was just making her wrist ache.

‘Let her go,’ a man’s voice said loudly and firmly from up ahead, and in the lacking light Allan could make out a figure silhouetted in a frosted window.

‘Doctor?’ Allan gasped in surprise, not expecting her rescue to come in the form of her mysterious stranger.

The Doctor stepped into better light. One of his fists was clenched and appeared to be twinkling. ‘I said let her go,’ he ordered. ‘I warn you, I’m armed.’

‘You are interfering with my task,’ the Cyberman answered, making no sign that he would release Allan anytime soon.

‘Am I indeed?’ retorted the Doctor. ‘Well let’s see how this interferes with it!’ He lunged toward the Cyberman and flicked open his hand, casting the gold-leaf dust from the statue into its chest unit.

The Cyberman stood firm.

The Doctor raised an eyebrow. ‘Well, come on then,’ he prompted. ‘This is the bit where you start choking and fall over.’

‘Is this a threat?’ asked the Cyberman, seeming totally unaffected by the dust.

The Doctor sighed. 'I suppose not.' He hadn't banked on the gold weakness being a design flaw of much later Cyberman types, something not found in the first generation.

The Cyberman didn't seem to be taking any chances. 'All threats must be annulled,' it said, reaching out and grabbing the Doctor's wrist with its free hand.

'Let me go!' the Doctor howled as the hand squeezed painfully tight. 'The city is in danger. You could all die!'

The Cyberman had not noticed Doctorman Allan taking advantage of the chaos created by the struggle with the Doctor. With her own free hand she reached for a button on its chest unit and pressed hard. The Cyberman suddenly froze, became completely inert and silent. The Doctor stared at Allan. 'I had to abort him,' she explained. 'He'd have killed you.' She prised its fingers from around her wrist and bade the Doctor do the same. When it was no longer holding either of them, it simply collapsed onto the floor with a sound like a pile of paint cans falling down. 'I don't take these decisions lightly.'

‘No doctor does,’ the Doctor agreed. ‘But how did you just shut it down like that?’ he was hoping he could learn from her an easy way to beat Cybermen in the future – simply by finding their “off” switch.

He was to be disappointed. ‘Emergency override,’ Allan explained. ‘It only works during processing. His programming wasn’t complete, so the override control hadn’t yet been disconnected. They usually sever all connections to that switch themselves once they’re fully processed and independent.’ She stooped down and put a hand on the cloth mask it wore.

‘Be careful,’ the Doctor urged her.

‘I’m closing his eyes,’ Allan said, setting the eyelids that were all but hidden beneath the mesh circles in the mask to their closed position. ‘He was a human being, Doctor.’

The Doctor wasn’t having that. ‘*It* is a Cyberman,’ he said. ‘The human part is debatable. How many more are there like it?’

Allan was surprised to hear the Doctor use the name she had given the processed surface crewmen only a little while after perfecting them. As far as she knew, no one outside the

palace had ever been told it. She had been given the job of perfecting the process after the last Head of Cybernetics had been executed for his failure to do so. There had been augmented crewmen going up onto the surface for nearly seventy years now, but only now were they surviving longer than two or three hours up there. Their problem had been that although their bodies had been adapted to survive the conditions on the surface they had been given no psychological conditioning. The vastness of the universe and the state of Mondas drove them insane. It was Allan who had seen that and added a brain-augmentation and programming element to the process. She had in doing so erased their humanity in essence, and had chosen in a drunken moment of humour to name her children. She stood in the Processing Unit watching the first successful specimen, who had once been a traveller from one of the other continents called Sun Lin Zheng, emerging from its berth. Allan had laughed and hiccupped and she and Constant had watched it come to life. She had sounded like a silly teenager when she had belched and said to Constant, 'Do you

know what this is?' And then she had giggled and pointed respectively to herself, 'Doctorman,' then Constant, 'Sisterman,' and finally Zheng, 'Cyberman.'

Cyberman. 'The Doctor had said it. Where had he heard it? Allan decided to worry about it later. There were more pressing matters. 'I have to get the generators back up,' she said urgently. Then she looked around. 'Where's your police guard?'

'A horse got the better of him,' the Doctor answered. 'I came in voluntarily. If you'll trust me, I can help.' He didn't fancy doing the Cybermen any favours, but outside lay a city full of people who did not deserve to freeze to death.

'I *don't* trust you,' Allan said, though in her suspicion of how much he must know she did believe he could be useful. She decided to obfuscate. 'But I have no choice, do I?' She pointed up the corridor. 'This way.'

To the Doctor's delight, it was the way he had been going anyway. They walked on, leaving Dodd still hiding among the racks of Cyberman suits.

Nyssa thumped hard on the TARDIS door for a fourth time and called out to the Doctor, again receiving no response. She desperately hoped that he would be there, even though with everything going on she knew deep in her heart that he wouldn't be. The coat Frank had given to her was made of a thick material and she was thankful for it, but it didn't keep out the bulk of the cold.

'Not there, is he?' Frank Hartley said despondently. Having found a coat for Nyssa, he had also found one for himself. He hadn't the heart to let her venture out into the freezing, icy city alone in the darkness. He carried his dad's torch. 'So now what?'

'The Committee palace,' answered Nyssa. 'If that's at the centre of everything going on here, that's where he'll be.'

'That's where Yvonne went,' mused Frank.

'Maybe we could find her too,' Nyssa said, feeling cruel for giving the boy some hope of finding his sister when she had guessed what must surely already have happened to her. 'How far is it?'

‘It’s just by those buildings,’ Frank pointed to show her, though it was almost impossible to see. ‘Past the Holiday tree.’

Suddenly Nyssa froze and lowered her voice to a whisper. ‘Frank,’ she said urgently. ‘Put the torch out.’

Frank switched off the torch and suddenly everything was darkness except for the white snow on the ground and what little light it gave up by reflecting what Nyssa had by now worked out were distant stars shining feebly through the crack in the roof. Nyssa pulled Frank back into the shadow of the TARDIS and they pinned themselves against it, breathing silently. Frank instantly spotted what had made Nyssa react in the way she did. Augmented horses tramped through the snow, each with a huge single light like a car’s headlamp shining from the centre of the forehead above and between the eyes. ‘The police,’ Frank whispered.

The mounted police were patrolling the area, it seemed, and barred the way to the Committee palace. ‘We’ll never get past them,’ said Nyssa worriedly.

‘Back home, then,’ Frank decided. ‘We’ll load up with more batteries for the torch and then try another way round.’ Keeping the torch off and navigating by the light of the horses in the distance, Frank and Nyssa backtracked in their own footprints to the Hartley house.

‘In here,’ Doctorman Allan said, opening a door and inviting the Doctor inside. ‘The main generator plant.’

The Doctor stepped through the door to be greeted by an immense and complex machine with metal pipes and bendy polymer tubes connecting to it and sprouting off in various directions to its appendages and ancillary devices. ‘There were pumps and pistons for as far as the eye could see, and the chamber was at least a couple of hundred metres deep. ‘It’s quite impressive,’ the ‘Time Lord said. ‘You’re producing energy on a vast scale.’

‘We would be,’ Allan agreed. ‘If it were working.’

The Doctor recognised some elements of the configuration. ‘Geothermal power?’ he asked.

‘Dry steam to drive the turbines pumped up from the centre of Mondas itself?’ he didn’t wait for Allan to confirm something that was perfectly obvious. ‘You could easily power hundreds of cities with something like this.’

Allan wasn’t listening. She was tearing a printout sheet from a computer obviously designed to keep technicians informed of how the system was behaving. She squinted at the sheet in the dim light. ‘All the emergency cutouts have activated,’ she murmured. ‘Every single one. Why?’

The Doctor snatched the printout and examined it for himself. ‘Someone’s been making massive demands on the power. It’s blown every fuse.’

‘I can’t fix it,’ groaned Allan. ‘I’m not an electrician. Everyone’s evacuated. I’d hoped to just throw a switch and have everything come back on again!’

‘Your time is running out,’ the Doctor said darkly, screwing up the printout and throwing it on the floor. ‘Your planet is wandering into the region of the Cherrybowl nebula.’

Allan gawked. ‘How can you know that?’

‘Spacefarers avoid it like the plague,’ the Doctor told her. ‘It’s a crucible of unstable primal energy. It’ll rip this planet apart if you get too close. By the sound of those explosions earlier it’s already started.’

Allan’s mind was reeling. Spacefarers? Did this explain why the man was a total stranger on Mondas? Was he a space traveller from another planet? That was ludicrous, surely; a far-fetched idea from the long-gone days of the cinema. ‘Who exactly are you?’ she asked, bewildered.

‘I want to help,’ was the Doctor’s answer. ‘For the sake of the people freezing outside.’

‘And the Committee?’

‘I didn’t think Cybermen allowed committees.’

‘It’ll die if I don’t get the power back on!’ The Doctor picked up on the phrasing she used. ‘It?’ usually a committee was made up of several members, a group of people. That was what the word committee meant: a single ideal to which a group of individuals commit. ‘Is it a single entity?’

‘We’ll all be dead without it,’ Allan persisted.

‘So where is it?’ the Doctor demanded, finally deciding that the time had come to confront this Committee and see if it was worth helping. He looked around the room. The Committee would not nest far from its power source, he felt sure. His eyes fell on an important-looking door and he barged through it. ‘What’s in here?’

‘No, Doctor!’ Allan cried, running after him. ‘Please!’

The Doctor was already in the room, and it was in darkness. His footfalls echoed around the vault, the only sound he could hear except for the panting of Doctorman Allan. ‘Empty,’ he said flatly, rounding on Allan. ‘No one sees the Committee,’ he quoted Thomas Dodd. ‘Is this the reason? Is your Committee a sham? Does it exist at all?’ He turned back into the room proper and shouted loudly, ‘Hello!’ There was no response. ‘Your rotten apple has no core,’ the Doctor said bitterly.

A light came on, taking him by surprise. A boxy lamp on a mechanical arm swung down from the ceiling casting a powerful blue beam over a peculiar metal frame with screens and wires and... *lumps of something* attached to it.

Allan's eyes lit up. 'It's alive!' she crowed with relief, making the Doctor think of the old *Frankenstein* film with Boris Karloff. 'The Committee, it's still alive!'

Zheng In Charge

The Cybermen in the processing unit were incomplete in their programming, but that did not mean that they were capable of any emotion. Nearly all of the recruits had been eighteen or nineteen years old, but none of them now were vulnerable to hormonal outbursts or fits of typical adolescent pique. However, despite their ability to feel a true sensation of impatience, of boredom or ennui, they were Cybermen, and Cybermen did not procrastinate. It was not logical to deal with a matter later if it could be dealt with now. The spokesperson of the rank still barricading the door decided that another fifteen minutes had been long enough, and the power had not come back on, and therefore action had to be taken without further delay. 'We can wait no

longer,' it announced to Sisterman Constant, turning to open the ward door so that it could go and see if there was anything better it could do for the Committee than waiting.

'Give Doctorman Allan time,' Constant insisted, her voice strained with desperation and a hint of personal discomfort. With their digestive systems ostensibly bypassed, it did not occur to the Cybermen that she needed the toilet. She stepped toward the door herself, hoping to nip out quickly.

'Stay where you are,' the Cyberman ordered, pulling the door shut again.

'I need things,' Constant complained, becoming even more uncomfortable. 'Food, a toilet, and warmer clothes. Unlike you, I'm not resistant to cold.'

'Your dependencies are a weakness,' the Cyberman told her. 'You should become like us. You would not have dependencies if you were one of us.'

Constant didn't like that idea. '*You* were chosen for a purpose,' she said haughtily. '*I* am still entitled to a choice.' She had no idea what a victim she was of another human weakness – conceit.

The other Cybermen began to chorus in unison, 'She knows our purpose! She knows our purpose!'

The Cyber-spokesman raised a hand to silence them. 'If you know our purpose and our tasks, you should tell us,' it told Constant.

Constant panicked, having put her foot in it and given herself away, overpowered by the feeling that her bladder was fit to burst. 'I don't know!' she lied, hoping that they were still sufficiently confused to miss any commitment of prior information on her part. But it wasn't that easy. 'It is imperative,' the Cyberman insisted, grabbing her shoulder forcefully, unaware of its own strength. Constant felt a sharp pain in her shoulder-blade, heard and felt the snap, lost control, disgraced herself. She started to whimper. The Cyberman did not care about the puddle on the floor, did not notice the smell, paid the whimpering no heed. 'It is imperative you tell us our tasks,' it ordered her instead.

It was almost flung off its feet as the doors to the ward were barged open. An enormous Cyberman, bigger than any of the others, bearing some black markings in places,

charged into the room. 'Stand away from the doors,' it boomed in a deeper and slightly more commanding voice than any of the other Cybermen. 'I am Zheng. You are all programmed to receive your commands from me.' It knew they were. That was assured by the Committee. 'My squad is assuming control here.' It looked at the freshly-processed Cyberman holding Constant and observed the state she was in. 'Release the Sisterman.'

'Data is being withheld,' the Cyberman informed its new commander, sure that Zheng would want to know and to do something about the matter. 'We must access the information.' It would not slacken its grip on Constant's shoulder.

'Release the Sisterman,' Zheng repeated. It knew that no data held by Constant at this time could possibly be of priority value. The other Cyberman opened its mouth to protest further, and Zheng decided to waste no further time arguing with it. The giant Commander simply deployed its weapon, causing the troublemaker to cry out, gurgle and clatter in smoke and flames to the floor.

Red-faced and sobbing, Constant eschewed her shame, redirecting it into anger. ‘How dare you bring violence into the wards,’ she demanded of Zheng. ‘Every life is precious here.’

Others of the Cybermen had started to talk amongst themselves. ‘Data is being withheld,’ said one, mirroring the one that had just died.

‘We must protect the Committee,’ added another.

‘We have no other directives,’ agreed a third. Zheng wondered why they were all milling about here in the first place, instead of doing something constructive. ‘Return to your tasks,’ it ordered.

‘They don’t know them,’ Constant explained, her mind still on getting out of the ward, but this time for a bath and change of clothes. ‘The power cut out in mid-programming. They know no better.’

The power issue was a priority matter, more so now that there were Cybermen without tasks. ‘Squad,’ Zheng called to its own personal phalanx of guards. ‘Escort these recruits back to the Processing Unit.’ At once and without question, the squad, moving far

more fluidly and smoothly than the fresh recruits, fully programmed and clear in their directives, obeyed their Commander's orders and marched their confused brothers away. Zheng examined Constant. It could see that her right arm hung limply from her shoulder instead of being firm and flexible as an arm should be, and also that there was a dark patch of dampness on her uniform that was not meant to be there. Her face also indicated signs of human weakness in its colour and expression. 'Your functionality has been impaired, Sisterman,' Zheng observed.

'I'm fine,' Constant dismissed him, hoping again for a chance to get out. She tried to make an excuse. 'I have duties,' she lied, knowing that apart from the Cybermen none of the other patients by now would be alive as a result of the power failure.

For a moment, Zheng let it slide. 'I have been summoned from the surface,' it informed Constant. She would probably need to be updated. 'Lack of power disabled my transport. I must report to the Committee.'

‘What’s happened?’ Constant asked, recalling that Doctorman Allan had said there had been explosions. ‘Are we under attack?’

‘Information on the crisis is secure,’ Zheng told her. Mondasians who found out the truth usually went mad, and a lunatic was no good for anything. ‘Why has the power not been restored?’

‘All of the other staff have evacuated,’ she explained, starting to feel uncomfortable again and queasy at her own smell. ‘It’s chaos here.’

‘Cybermen would not desert their posts,’ Zheng said, making another point about human inferiority. In the crisis, Zheng did not run away. ‘Is the Committee secure?’

‘Doctorman Allan is trying to reach them.’

‘You are damaged.’

‘I know. It’s nothing.’

Zheng did not believe that. It reached over and took her right shoulder into its hand, pressing its fingertips down and making her wince. ‘Your scapula is fractured,’ it said, not guessing that as a nurse she’d have been able to work that out for herself.

‘It’s nothing,’ she whined. ‘I told you. What about that innocent recruit you shot?’ She

hoped that would distract Zheng from the matter in hand.

It didn't. 'He will be taken for reassembly,' the Commander answered. 'So will you.' It looked to the two Cybermen that had remained with it, its personal guard, and ordered them, 'Take these two to the Processing Unit and conduct repairs as soon as power is restored.'

Constant shrieked as one of the Cybermen seized her. 'Take your hands off me!' she wailed in protest.

'Resistance will not be tolerated,' said Zheng in its usual flat tone. There was no menace in the statement. It was no threat; merely a fact.

The Committee *was* alive – if such a state of being could even in the wildest imagination be called any kind of life, and as the Doctor stared up at it in bewilderment he felt a sensation he would never in all his centuries of living have believed he would experience: his disgust at the Cybermen reaching an entirely new level. The frame was huge, perhaps thirty metres tall and fifty wide, made of metal rails like narrow pipes with socket

joints connecting them in various places. Metal chairs that couldn't possibly be comfortable were bolted into sections of the frame, and in each chair sat a man, or rather something that had once been a man. Each member of the Committee wore a Cyberman body containment suit and had a chest unit with flashing lights on it, but the heads were perfectly human, all old-aged and withered, the skin a kind of ochre-grey, dry and cracked, raw red lips chapped and peeling, teeth all long-gone, braces in their necks providing voices. They had no hair; it had probably fallen out a long time ago, and there were mechanical prostheses embedded in each cranium, one of which was a kind of massive cylindrical plug with a thick black heavy-duty cable winding its way through the frame and down to the capacitor bank that was part of the setup at the base of the structure. As well as the capacitor bank, computers and screens cluttered the bottom of the framework, its organic components held higher up but all linked to the floor apparatus by way of yet more cables attached to their heads. The screens were dull and occasionally flickered,

and the mobile spotlight that usually hovered in the air and danced over the Committee members' faces when they spoke had settled on a small shelf on the wall, emitting a feeble greying glow. 'Is this your Committee?' the Doctor demanded of Doctorman Allan. 'This primitive many-headed cybernetic Hydra?'

'It's still alive,' Allan said with satisfaction, paying no attention to the Doctor's tirade. 'It must have a vestigial power.'

'It's obscene!' the Doctor roared at her, forcing her to listen. 'It's devouring every resource you have! No wonder that city out there is still stuck in the 1950s!'

'Twenty of our greatest minds joined together as one to propose clear solutions to our problems,' Allan quoted from school history lessons. She then continued to ignore the Doctor. 'It's Doctorman Allan,' she called to the Committee. 'Can you hear me?'

But the Doctor continued to vent his fury without relent. 'Pontificating like some monstrous tinpot Solomon!' he snapped, rounding on Allan. 'You still think of them as human, don't you?'

‘Help me get the power back on,’ sighed Allan, hoping that if she ignored enough of his ranting he’d eventually give up.

But he wasn’t finished by a long way. ‘*Look at it!*’ he shouted almost right into Allan’s ear, pointing up at the twenty near-corpses high in the frame. ‘Swollen heads wired into the system, disregarded bodies withering like rotten fruit?’ His voice dropped to a dramatic whisper of foreboding. ‘If I chop one head off, will two more sprout in its place?’ Then he was back to blustering. ‘You know where it’ll lead, don’t you?’

Before Allan could answer, the door slid open and a Cyberman entered the room. The Doctor started. It was the biggest Cyberman he’d ever seen, bigger even than the Cyber Controller he had met on Telos. Its suit barely contained the rippling muscles of the human being it had once been, the silk of its mask stretched tight over its gaunt, square face, its hands like shovels and its legs like the trunks of mighty English oaks. ‘Doctorman Allan,’ it boomed, its voice almost as big as its body. ‘Why has power not been restored?’

‘CyberCommander Zheng,’ Allan acknowledged, recognising her own handiwork at a glance. She didn’t show it, but she felt a pleasant sensation at the rekindling of their acquaintance. They had not been together since he had been posted to the surface nearly three years ago, though on occasion they had spoken, purely in the course of duty. He had been the lucky strike of the project, the first fully-functional Cyberman that was capable of surviving the rigours of work on the surface. He had outlived all of the other surface crewmen so far by a fair time and showed no signs of giving in yet. ‘The Committee is still alive,’ Allan told it, knowing that this would be considered priority information.

‘And?’

‘The failsafe cutouts prevented any serious damage.’

‘More’s the pity,’ the Doctor muttered. Zheng suddenly noticed the man. ‘Who is this?’

Quickly the Doctor covered for himself. ‘I’m a geothermal engine specialist,’ he lied to the giant Cyberman. ‘Here to fix your generators.’

No one else here is qualified since all your staff ran away.'

'Is this true?' Zheng asked Allan.

Before she could decide whether or not to corroborate the Doctor's story, the Committee buzzed into life. 'Doctorman Allan?' it called, not yet fully aware.

'Yes?' Allan looked up eagerly, like a dutiful daughter in a Victorian family awaiting her father's commands. 'I hear you. Are you safe?'

'The processing,' the Committee said, its voice slurring and wavering in pitch. 'Have you... found... a solution?'

'We're doing all we can,' she promised.

'Utmost priority,' the Committee insisted. 'Little time... left. Restore... the... power.'

'We're working on it,' Allan nodded, grabbing the Doctor's arm. 'Come on, Doctor.' She dragged him back to the generator chamber.

Zheng picked up on the word. The title of Doctorman was not usually given to a mechanical technician. 'Doctor?'

Luckily for the Doctor, the Committee distracted it. 'Zheng,' it called. 'Report status on the surface.'

Zheng was staring at the Doctor.

‘Zheng,’ the Committee pressed.

The Doctor waited. Allan urged him to get moving, but he wanted to hear the report.

‘Storm radiation has increased two hundred and thirty per cent,’ Zheng reported finally. ‘Endurance levels have been met, but work on the propulsion system has been curtailed by the power loss.’

The propulsion system. The Doctor knew about that. It was ironic that the Daleks, a race of great scientific advancement, had not ever been able to build, install, operate and maintain a planetary propulsion system and yet the Mondasians had managed it when they were still in all but name perfectly ordinary flesh and blood human beings. The Daleks had developed plans for such an engine and tried to adapt the planet Earth for its installation in the twenty-second century, but all they had finished up with was a volcanic grave just outside Dunstable. And literally millions of years earlier (it occurred to the Doctor at that very moment as he listened to Zheng’s report that the Silurians still ruled the Earth and humans had yet to develop a

civilisation) a group of virtually ordinary men and women had adapted a planet almost exactly like Earth for interstellar travel. Though admittedly the Doctor had interfered with the Daleks' plan sufficiently to get them all boiled in their casings like hens' eggs for breakfast. But planetary propulsion systems weren't practical, which made the Doctor wonder why people were silly enough to try to build and use them, and the one on Mondas had proven his point already, because it had stopped working. That was why there were crews up on the surface. They'd broken down on a B-road in the middle of nowhere and there hadn't been an AA man for miles, so someone had to get out and pop the bonnet. Of course, this was no ordinary B-road, the cold conditions and the influence of the nebula worse than any blizzard ever faced by man on Earth, and that meant that if anyone was going out there, he'd have to do a fair sight more than merely wrap up warm. 'Of course,' the Doctor breathed, turning to Allan. 'That's what the Cybermen were created for. Your propulsion unit's failed and it's only possible for anyone to survive long

enough to repair it in the extreme conditions with severe augmentation.'

Allan nodded. 'And now those same conditions are extending into the city.'

'So,' the Doctor said, realising what that implied, 'no power, no people – no *anything*.'

'And Mondas becomes a dead world,' Allan agreed.

Finally the Doctor allowed her to lead him into the generator chamber.

A Tearful Reunion

‘The lock’s frozen,’ Frank Hartley complained as he fumbled with the key to the front door of his home. He started to bang on the door and call for his father. Nyssa stood just beyond the doorstep in the piling snow, hoping that it wouldn’t get any colder but worried that Absolute Zero was a distinct possibility. ‘Dad!’ Frank called. ‘Dad, it’s us! Let us in!’

Nyssa hoped he would hear soon. She looked out across the snow, completely flat and featureless but for the buildings jutting out, the sets of her own and Frank’s footprints...

And the bumps.

There were bumps in the snow, moving rapidly as if disturbed by something underneath. Of course, that was exactly the

case, and a something small burst out of the white blanket for a moment, giving a flash of silver in the torchlight before vanishing again. Nyssa gawked. 'Cybermats!' she shouted urgently, now hoping even more desperately that Dad Hartley would open the door soon.

Frank glanced over his shoulder. There were at least thirty fast-moving humps in the snow, and more would be coming. 'They're swarming,' Frank realised. He banged even harder on the door. 'Dad! Let us in!'

The door opened, 'Steady on,' Dad Hartley said indignantly. 'Think of the neighbours.'

Frank didn't care about the neighbours. He grabbed Nyssa's hand and barged inside, pulling her through with him. 'Shut the door,' he said urgently.

Dad looked outside for a second. 'Flippin' heck!' he exclaimed. 'Where's me cheeser and traps?'

But something was wrong. Nyssa watched them for a moment. They weren't coming to the house. Instead they were circling around, crossing each other's paths and making a complicated geometrical pattern in the snow. It could almost have been called art if anyone

present could have stripped away the facts surrounding it. 'They're not interested in us,' Nyssa murmured.

'Something's spooked them,' said Dad, not used to Cybermats being so possessed by anything.

Then Frank spotted it. 'Look!'

Dad and Nyssa followed where Frank pointed and saw it. A Cyberman was charging wildly toward the Hartley home, the Cybermats' dance obviously the result of some effect the crazed creature had on them. 'What's the matter with it?' gasped Nyssa.

'Get inside,' Frank said, not giving a damn what was the matter with it. 'Quick!' And he darted past his father and slammed the door shut. 'It'll go past,' he said with absolutely no confidence. 'It didn't see us.' He hoped it hadn't.

Something hard slammed into the door.

Doctorman Allan stood waiting, hands on hips, slightly annoyed and more than slightly impatient, looking down at the Doctor's striped trousers protruding from underneath a

raised section of the geothermal engine. 'There had been slatted rails installed on walls and attached to carriages bolted to most of the engine apparatus so that when maintenance was required the sections could be rolled easily up the rail where they would lock in place so that the engineer could get underneath. The sections were heavy and the Doctor had been forced to cajole Doctorman Allan into helping him lift them. She wasn't very strong, but with two of them working they'd managed to shove it far enough up the rail for the Doctor to be able to fit under and have a little cramped manoeuvring space. A bag of tools had been found in one of the wall lockers also installed for maintenance, and that now lay near his feet. 'What's it like under there?' Allan asked, hoping that the reply would not be a facetious comment about how comfortable or pretty it was.

She was lucky this time. 'The traction routes have burnt right out,' the Doctor explained with a sigh. 'The apertures in the circuits are closable, but the devices that would usually close them can't move. I'll have to try and do it manually.'

‘If you do that, will the pumps start to feed the heat exchanges again?’ Allan asked hopefully.

The Doctor slid out from under the section of apparatus and slammed it down to the floor again. It was easier to put it down than push it up. He rooted around in the tool bag and produced a crowbar. ‘I’m going to have to resort to brute force,’ he said optimistically, marching around the section he had just examined to a section of floor that had actually had installed into it a part of the engine workings. There were ten thick metal panels like narrow trap doors that had sprung up from the floor on powerful metal springs. The doors, when sealed, completed ten circuits, but were designed to automatically pop open in the event of an overload to stop power building in the circuits and prevent an explosion. They had all popped, and normally there were machines on traction rails like the rails on the wall for the maintenance engineers that would shut them again when so instructed, but their control systems had burnt out and the machines were inert on their rails, unable to roll over the doors and close them.

Examining a traction railway running down the back of each door, he made for the nearest end of the line of panels and stabbed the crowbar savagely into the rail, wedging it there. 'This is only temporary, you realise,' he groaned as he heaved on the bar like a lever, fighting the powerful spring with all his strength. To his relief it finally gave and the huge metal door slammed down, completing its circuit as it locked in place. A few lights came on around the room, accompanied by a soft hum of power that vaguely reminded the Doctor of home. 'The only long-term solution is to get Mondas away from that nebula.'

'The propulsion system is the Committee's prime objective,' Zheng said in answer to the Doctor's remark as it marched into the generator chamber. The Doctor jammed his crowbar into another of the circuit breakers. 'I'd guessed these generators supplied more than the city,' he said with a strain as he managed to shut another. The hum became louder and some cogs a little way back into the room started turning slowly. 'Second circuit closed, eight to go!'

‘Doctorman Allan,’ Zheng said. ‘This man is an alien intruder.’

How did Zheng know that? Was it even true? An alien? A real live non-Mondasian? Allan didn’t know and didn’t want to know. ‘I’ve requisitioned him,’ she said. ‘So hands off.’

‘How did he enter the city?’

‘I don’t know and I don’t care. He’s helping us. Look, he’s fixing the engine.’

The Doctor dug his crowbar in again as Zheng watched him. ‘Excuse me?’ he called to Zheng. ‘Just how complete is the propulsion system? Completely complete? Or just a little bit?’

‘It is complete,’ Zheng told him.

‘But the number of engineers is limited,’ Allan added. ‘It involves colossal energies.’

‘And only Cybermen can undertake the task,’ the Doctor concluded, heaving on the bar. ‘So what’s the survival rate?’

‘That is not your concern,’ said Zheng.

Allan told him anyway. ‘Nineteen per cent.’ She was sure that he genuinely wanted to help – why else would he be risking serious injury to get the power on? Surely it would be best

to tell him how bad things really were, in case he could do something.

‘So you keep on putting more innocent people through the process, like so much meat for the grinder,’ the Doctor said.

That was the one hang-up. ‘This alien, whatever his motives, wanted to help, but didn’t understand the value of Cybermen or how the Mondasians’ desperation had driven them to this. They were doing what they had to do. They had no choice. ‘Doctor,’ Allan tried to persuade him. ‘Without Cybermen we cannot survive. They are our saviours.’

‘Him?’ the Doctor scoffed, pointing rudely at Zheng. ‘A saviour? You’re trapped, all of you. Your future is inescapable.’

‘We are the future,’ said Zheng.

‘Exactly,’ agreed the Doctor, successfully locking down another circuit and causing the temperature gauge on the main generator to register that it was heating up. ‘Four down,’ he observed. ‘Six nails in the coffin to go.’

The thing kept banging on the door. It took a run up and slammed into it hard. It was

screaming and Nyssa covered her ears, not wanting to listen to it. It was mad, surely. There had to be a fault in its processing. Its brain augmentation or programming had failed, possibly due to the power cut, and it had lost its mind and gone wandering. Dad didn't want the door broken down. He hadn't the means to fix it, and it was the only thing keeping the cold out. He relented, despite his fears, and opened it. The Cyberman staggered inside, still screaming. The Hartleys and Nyssa backed away. 'What do you want?' Dad shouted at it, but it just started to whine.

'It's a surface crewman,' said Frank in surprise. 'What's it doing here?'

'It's a *Cyberman*,' Nyssa corrected him. 'It doesn't need to give explanations.'

It was whimpering like a wounded dog, and Dad looked at it, trying to read something from its masked face. 'It sounds... distressed.'

'It can't,' Nyssa said coldly. 'They don't have feelings.'

'Well, let's see, eh?' said Dad resolutely, moving in to examine it.

‘Keep back!’ wailed Nyssa, terrified that as soon as he came in close the giant monster would pull off his head.

‘Careful, Dad,’ added Frank.

But his father did not hold back. Carefully he eased around the giant and shepherded it into the living room. He waved to Frank behind him to close the front door against the cold. Nyssa watched in horror and confusion as the old man led the whimpering Cyberman into the living area and somehow got it to slump on the sofa. ‘Now then, in there,’ he said gently, as if talking to an injured child. ‘What’s all this fuss, eh?’

The Cyberman started to form words, struggling and stammering. ‘Duh... duhhhh...’ Dad cupped his ear with a hand. ‘Sorry?’ he said kindly. ‘Try again.’

‘Dad,’ it said.

Both Hartleys suddenly realised with horror and deep pain what had happened. The disfigured heap of plastic and scrap metal slumped on their living room sofa was Yvonne. Dad Hartley could barely believe it. She was so big now, and she’d had a cardioectomy and... and who knew what else?

He didn't care. Whatever her form, this was Yvonne, and he loved her. He knew that he could even feel love for this silver giant, almost a machine, bulky and mutilated and insane, still his daughter. Still the love of his life. 'Yvonne?' he whispered. 'Is that you?'

'Dad,' was all the creature could say. 'Daaaaaaaddddd.'

'What have they done to you?' Dad whispered, feeling the tears building behind his eyes, fighting to push them back. 'I can't see your face.' She'd had such a pretty face. Like her mother when she was young. Such a pretty, pretty face. Suddenly he desperately wanted to see it again. 'Let's get this horrid mask off.' He looked for a seam but couldn't find one. The cowl was a little baggy around the neck and so he pulled there. The material was flimsy and he tore it and rolled the mask up.

It wasn't Yvonne's face.

The cheekbones were there, the jawline, the little dark mole just below her lip that her mum always used to call a beauty spot. Even her lovely brown eyes were still there, but frozen, glazed over and sunk somehow into

small round things that looked a bit like camera lenses. It had once been Yvonne's face, but not anymore. Her mouth was held in a mechanical brace and it looked like her ears had been amputated and the cranial tubes sunk directly into the holes. Her hair had been shaven off and there were wires running from her head to the inside of the cranial cap. Her face was puffy and swollen as if she had mumps and there was dark bruising around her eyes and mouth. This was a twisted, bastardised parody of a teenage girl. Yvonne Hartley, the undead-unliving, no longer human.

The Doctor slammed the eighth circuit breaker hatch shut and pulled the crowbar out triumphantly. 'Two circuits left,' he announced.

'Keep going, Doctor,' Allan encouraged him. 'And what happens when I get the power back up?' he demanded, ramming the crowbar into the rail on the ninth hatch.

'The Committee will restore order,' said Zheng.

The Doctor shook his head. 'The first dose of power is for the city,' he insisted.

'The Committee will be first,' replied Zheng, intransigent in that decision. Of course, it had not been Zheng's to make or break. The Committee had instilled in all Cyberman programming that it was first priority on everything.

The Doctor pulled the crowbar out of the hatch. 'Agree, Commander,' he demanded, wielding the bar like a weapon. 'Or I'll smash every circuit and logic junction I see.' Zheng would probably kill him before he could carry out such a threat, but he was determined not to back down. He shoved the bar back into the rail and slammed down the ninth circuit door. The main engine started to rumble with power like a giant animal digesting a good meal. The Doctor raised the crowbar again and looked at Zheng. 'One more to go,' he announced. 'Or not. It's up to you.'

'Zheng,' Doctorman Allan challenged the giant CyberCommander. 'The city must come first.' Zheng remained silent. Allan knew the Doctor was right: no one in the city would survive without power to keep warm. Many

would have already died. 'You must agree, Commander!' she shouted.

The voice of the Committee floated like a ghost across the generator room, sounding weak and feeble. 'It... is... agreed.'

'Your masters' voice, Zheng,' the Doctor spat. 'Agree to everything now.'

'The city comes... first,' said the Committee. Zheng stepped back, as if conceding. The Doctor wasn't aware of the Commander's true intentions. 'Right,' he told Allan. 'Once this last one is closed, you can turn the power on.' He jammed in the crowbar, oblivious to the fact that Zheng had moved behind Allan and had its hand over the switch. The door was stubborn on the last few inches and the Doctor sat on it to use his weight as a means of getting it closed.

He was still sitting on it when Zheng threw the power switch.

Electricity coursed through the Doctor's body, fingers of light like tiny streaks of lightning performed a helter-skelter ride from his head to his feet, and he collapsed, eyes open, inert and lifeless on top of the circuit panel.

Tragedy

Yvonne was still screaming. She was confused, as if something was missing and she couldn't work out what it was. The lights came up suddenly and she quietened for a moment, just burbling a little. 'The power's come back on,' said Nyssa, looking around the living room and remembering how she had helped Yvonne to pin strings of tinsel to the walls near the ceiling and decorate the synthetic tree. This was something they had done together, chatting and giggling, having a good time and forgetting their troubles for a few moments. For Yvonne, nothing like that would ever happen again. Yvonne had her head cocked slightly, like a dog at the sound of a whistle, and she was looking at something. It had her completely transfixed. It

was her father who spotted it. The little cybernetic bird twittering in its cage in the corner. 'Trillerby,' he said with a smile, glad that she remembered it. Perhaps there might be some hope. Yvonne turned her head to look toward the battered tree, staring at its twinkling lights.

'She's fascinated by them,' Nyssa mumbled. Frank was finding it hard to take it in. 'That's my sister,' he said incredulously. 'What have they done to her?'

Dad led her closer to the Holiday tree. 'Come on, love,' he smiled, gently taking her bare hand and noticing with a pang of sadness the little scar she had on the back of her palm from the time she had fallen while climbing a real tree and cut it on a piece of limestone. She'd been about seven, and she'd not shed a single tear. Fifteen stitches. 'Let's look at the tree,' he indulged her, hoping to bring out more of her human qualities, the little vices and virtues about her he adored.

'It's horrible,' Frank said, shaking his head, unable to wrench his mind from the shock of seeing his sister like this. 'Is that really her?'

Dad ignored him, concentrating as he crouched in front of the tree and helped Yvonne to manage the same. 'Now, remember what it all means?' he asked her, pointing at the tree. 'Our scraggy old tree is a symbol to remind us of the forests that used to cover the surface of the world, long, long ago. The lights are the stars above the stone sky.' He pointed to the gleaming spherical baubles set at intervals around the fake branches, flanking the tinsel and the string of lights. 'And the baubles are the planets we pass by, winding our long journey through them, like the tinsel.'

Yvonne seemed to register something for herself, and she pointed to the apex of the tree like a tiny baby would. 'Star,' she said very clearly.

Her dad smiled and nodded. 'Yes. The Star. The old sun we left behind and one day will get back to.'

Yvonne started to whine.

Dad gently turned her so that she could see where her brother stood. 'Look, love. Here's our Frank.'

Frank wasn't sure how to react. He felt almost as confused as he was sure Yvonne was. He knew that his dad had a purpose, trying to coax the old Yvonne back into existence by provoking familiar thoughts. He managed a feeble wave. 'Hello, big sis,' he called gently. He hadn't called her that since they were children, but he knew Yvonne, the real Yvonne, would remember. He wanted to tell her that he loved her too, but though he found the words in his agony he couldn't use them.

Dad focused on a more recent memory, pointing to the other figure in the room. 'Oh look,' he said in mock surprise. 'Here's Nyssa, too.'

'Hello Yvonne,' was all Nyssa could manage.

'She doesn't even know me,' Frank said quietly, his voice hollow, shaking.

Yvonne's whimpers stretched and became much more whiney, and Dad realised she had started to cry. He patted her hand gently to soothe her, feeling it to be the only part of her that might feel the comfort. 'Please don't cry,' he said gently. 'We're all back together now, like a proper family.'

Sisterman Constant could hear machinery as she slowly regained consciousness. For a moment her vision swam in and out of focus and she was confused. Her shoulder pain had become a dull ache and she was on her back, no longer wet and smelly, but dry and clean. Someone had cleaned her up while she had been sedated. Why had she been sedated? She had a slight headache and felt groggy and dizzy. 'What...' she slurred. 'What's happening?'

'The power has been restored,' a Cyberman answered from somewhere she couldn't see. Why had the Cybermen taken over the wards? Had the staff not come back? 'The recruits' programming is completing automatically.'

Constant's vision slowly cleared and she looked up to find the panelled interior of a tube in the wall. 'I'm on the processing conveyor!' she shrieked. 'Why am I on the processing conveyor? Get me down from here!'

‘Commander Zheng has instructed us that you are to be processed with all other available staff,’ the Cyberman told her.

‘No!’ she cried. ‘I’m a selector. You need me to help the recruits. I have tasks to perform!’

‘Your tasks will be clearer after processing,’ the Cyberman said. It activated the system and the hatch over the tube swung shut and sealed her inside, just as it had once done Yvonne Hartley.

The mobile spotlight in the Committee chamber floated around in the air, swinging its powerful brilliant blue column of light over the faces of the Committee members as they spoke amongst themselves. Unlike the Cybermen and the police, their mouths actually formed the words, though it was the machinery that spoke them. ‘The Committee is restored,’ one of them said. ‘Testing of the propulsion system must resume immediately.’

‘Reports on the city’s environment must be assessed,’ added another Committee member. The Doctor listened to it from the generator chamber, lying down on his side on the circuit

breaker hatch, playing dead. He had played his last hand and lost. There was no way now to save the Mondasians from themselves. He would just have to leave as soon as possible. As soon as he could find Nyssa. 'Got to find Nyssa,' he murmured aloud. Got to find her.'

'Doctor?' a woman's voice called from behind him in surprise.

'What?' mumbled the Doctor. 'Who's that?'

'It's Doctorman Allan,' said the voice. 'Lie still.'

'You will oversee the processing, Zheng,' the Committee continued in the other room. 'And Doctorman Allan will answer to you.'

'Allan?' mumbled the Doctor. He felt a little sick and dizzy.

'Just rest, Doctor,' Allan whispered.

'Yes,' the Doctor agreed. 'Rest.'

'Doctorman Allan,' Zheng called from the Committee chamber.

Allan walked over to the doorway. 'Zheng,' she called, pointing back to the Doctor. 'Help me with him.'

'Why?' asked Zheng, considering the Doctor to be unimportant now that his task was

complete and as far as it knew he had no further potential for tasks.

‘Look at him!’ Allan snapped. ‘He took the overfeed discharge of the entire grid and he’s *alive*, Zheng. Alive after something that would have killed even you.’

Suddenly Zheng was interested. ‘High resilience?’

‘Incredible resilience, more like,’ breathed Allan, genuinely impressed. ‘I’ve got to get a full corporeal diagnostic. If his physiology can stand up to that kind of shock, he could be the answer we’ve been looking for all this time!’

Zheng looked down at the Doctor, still slumped on the circuit breaker, still absorbing energy from it and still very much alive. The CyberCommander began to consider the possibility that the alien intruder might have a further use after all.

Yvonne screamed.

‘What’s happening?’ yelled Frank.

‘Dad!’ Yvonne cried, her voice a confusion of person and machine, harmonised

mechanical vocalisations warped by inflections of pain and fear. 'Frank! Dad!' She raised her arms and gripped her cranial tubes. Nyssa realised what was happening. 'She's receiving radio signals!' She watched Yvonne spinning wildly, staggering and holding onto her tubes. It should have been obvious that it would happen, really. The Cybermen had done a head-count, realised that one of them was missing and had gone rogue, and they were aborting it by remote control. Yvonne stopped screaming and started to keel over.

'Frank!' Dad shouted. 'Help me catch her!' The cybernetic misfit that had once been a sweet and lovely girl collapsed into the arms of her father and brother, finally dead. They held her. Finally her father gave in and started to weep for her.

'Put him in the corporeal scanner,' Allan told Zheng as the giant Cyberman carried the weak and semi-conscious alien Doctor in his arms into Allan's examination room.

Zheng laid the Doctor on a flat couch that protruded from a large circular machine

similar to the tube through which those being processed passed. 'I will return to the Processing Unit,' it told Allan. 'There are more recruits to be processed.'

'This is more important!' snapped Allan. The Doctor lay on the couch, mumbling quietly to himself. 'Must reach Nyssa... where... where is she?'

Allan switched the corporeal scanner on and started setting up the data recorder. 'Where's Constant?'

'The Sisterman has been sent for processing,' Zheng informed her. 'As I instructed. She was injured.'

'No,' gibbered Allan. 'Not Constant.' Zheng wasn't interested in her hysteria. 'You must proceed with the scan,' it said. 'Sisterman Constant will resume her duties when her processing is complete.'

Allan could hardly believe it. Constant, a Cyberman! She didn't know how to feel, and in that state of mind-numbing ambivalence, she decided to just do as Zheng suggested and get on with the job in hand.

The Final Link

Frank was standing in the open doorway, staring out that the snowy landscape and the swirls of flakes, now all so brilliant under the floodlamps. He could see the effect it had on the city properly now. The crack in the roof, shrouded in white mist, let a cascade of whiteness fall down like a waterfall not of water but of milk, or the pouring of super-white washing powder from the sky, down onto the hydroponics centre, almost burying it. Snowflakes flew and fell everywhere, scattering in all directions, adding to the layers on the ground inch after inch after inch. The hydroponics centre provided all of the fruit and vegetables depended upon by everyone in the city, but Frank just couldn't think about it, couldn't care about it. He stared into the

approaching oblivion, into the end of the world itself, and thought only of Yvonne. He felt guilt and regret. He should have shown her how much he loved her when she was alive. He should have been as kind and caring and gentle to her as their father had been. He had been cruel and spiteful and resentful. He had treated her unfairly. He had been mean and vicious. He had not been a good brother, and now he could not even tell her how sorry he was.

He felt a gentle hand on his shoulder. Yvonne had once touched him like that, when their mother had died. Once. Never before and never again. It was Nyssa's hand, he knew.

'Come inside, Frank,' she said. 'You haven't a coat.' After a pause she added, 'Your father's asking for you.' She looked out of the door and suddenly noticed there were people in the streets, not Cybermen or augmented police but ordinary human people, standing stock-still, staring in the same direction that Frank was. 'What's everyone staring at?'

Frank pointed up at the waterfall. 'It's the frozen atmosphere,' he said distantly. 'It's

broken through. It's pouring down onto the hydro-houses.'

'Where they grow all the crops?' she recalled from her chat with Yvonne during the raising of the Holiday decorations.

'Where Yvonne works...' Frank corrected himself: 'Worked. You know what that means?'

'I can guess,' nodded Nyssa.
Frank gave a voice to the fear. 'It won't matter if we don't all freeze to death. We're going to starve anyway.'

'Ugh!' groaned the Doctor as his consciousness reasserted itself and he found himself apparently alone, lying on a couch in what looked like a doctor's consulting room with a few flash extras thrown in. 'Why didn't I stay in the TARDIS?'

'Psst!' a voice hissed from nearby, and the Doctor raised his aching head a little to look around. The voice became a little more familiar as it said, 'Hello, Doctor.'
The Doctor rested his head again and sighed, unsure whether or not the advent of Thomas

Dodd was a good thing. ‘I thought you were going home.’

‘I couldn’t get out for the guards,’ Dodd sniffed. He shuffled up to the couch where the Doctor could see him and squinted. ‘They’ve been giving you a right going over,’ he said, looking at the burnt patches all over the Doctor’s clothes and the blistering on his hands.

Despite his discomfort, the Doctor forced himself up into a sitting position and faced Dodd properly. ‘I need a rest,’ he panted. ‘No energy. Where’s Doctorman Allan?’

‘She and that Cyber-thing went belting off in a right lather,’ Dodd shrugged. ‘Don’t know what about.’

‘Me, probably,’ the Doctor inferred.

‘Do you know they’ve got production lines?’ Dodd said, sounding all in all pretty disgusted to the Doctor’s satisfaction. ‘They can churn out these things by the tramload.’

The Doctor had other matters on his mind. There was no more he could do here. He’d had enough of Mondasians and Cybermen and Committees. He just wanted to get out of here. He wanted to get into the TARDIS and

leave. 'Do me a favour, will you 'Thomas,' he asked. 'The Hartley family.'

'Those scroungers?' Dodd sniffed. 'What about them?'

'I think my friend is with them. I need to get a message to her. Could you deliver it?'

'Why don't you speak to them yourself? I can bring the ward phone in.'

'I don't have their number to ring.'

Dodd grinned. 'I do. I never forget the number of a creditor!'

The Doctor smiled humourlessly. 'You're only too kind.'

'I know,' Dodd nodded. 'That's my weakness. But, er, what do I get, eh? I'm doing *you* a favour, and I'm right out of stock now.'

Nyssa sat down on the armchair opposite the one in which Dad Hartley was seated and listened to Frank's tirade. He had entered the second stage of his grief: the stage at which his guilt and disgust with himself would turn into a blaze of rage at everyone else. Nyssa wanted him to calm down, wanted him to

understand. ‘Frank,’ she tried to say to him. ‘I really am truly sorry about Yvonne.’

‘What do you know?’ Frank bellowed petulantly. ‘Who’ve you ever lost?’ He really had no idea that Nyssa’s grief extended far beyond his own.

‘Yvonne was very kind to me,’ she said, deciding not to make matters worse by sharing her own pain. ‘If only I could get in touch with the Doctor...’

‘Oh, just shut up about the bloody Doctor!’ Frank shouted. ‘We’ll all be frozen soon, frozen and starved, and my sister...’ He quietened a little. ‘Well, she’s better off out of it.’

The phone rang. Frank got it. It was for Nyssa. She was puzzled as to who would be calling her at the Hartleys’ home. A warm sensation of relief flooded over her when she heard the voice on the other end of the call. ‘Nyssa?’

‘Doctor!’ she gushed, glad that he was alive. ‘Where are you? Are you all right?’

‘I’m in the Committee Palace,’ the Doctor told her. ‘And I’m fine. I don’t have long, so

just listen. I need you to collect some things from the TARDIS for me, there's a...'

Nyssa interrupted quickly. 'Doctor, you have the key to the TARDIS. I can't get in.'

The Doctor groaned. 'I should've realised. Well don't worry, I'll think of something and call you back if I can.'

The front door of the Hartleys' home smashed open. A Committee policeman stood in the doorway. 'You are the other stranger!' it declared, grabbing Nyssa by the arm and pulling her out through the door. The phone receiver hung down on its cord, the Doctor's voice coming from it, calling out her name.

'Nyssa!' the Doctor shouted into the telephone to no avail. He looked up at Dodd with worry. 'Something's happened.'

Before Dodd could say a word, the door to the consultation room opened and in walked Doctorman Allan, in the company of another doctorman and CyberCommander Zheng. She was surprised to see him, and he was surprised to see her. 'Doctorman Allan,' he said sheepishly, backing away from her.

‘Thomas Dodd,’ she returned wickedly. It was evident to the Doctor that she’d managed after whatever she’d been doing to him was finished to sneak off and get slightly drunk.

‘I just ducked in out of the cold,’ Dodd stammered feebly.

Zheng reached down and grabbed Dodd’s arm, yanking him onto his feet. ‘Take this one for processing,’ he ordered. Two other Cybermen had entered the room, and these took Dodd and dragged him to the door.

‘Get off me!’ Dodd yelled. ‘What about his heart? The Doctor promised me one of his hearts!’

‘You won’t have to worry about your business where you’re going,’ cackled Allan. She watched the Cybermen drag Dodd away and turned back to the Doctor.

‘Let him go!’ the Doctor demanded, making to get up. Zheng pinned him down with a single massive hand.

‘Be careful with him, Zheng,’ Allan grinned the toothy grin of a drunkard. ‘The Doctor is more precious than he knows.’

‘Am I now?’ wondered the Doctor, sure that he could hear a hint of menace in her words.

The chime of the communications speaker that connected Allan's offices and wards to the Committee chamber sounded. 'How can this alien intruder help us?' demanded the united voice of the Committee.

'Ah,' nodded the Doctor. 'We are not alone.' Allan rushed over to a small machine on a cable that connected under the communications speaker. On the end of the cable was a small camera, and she ran it over a set of pictures. 'These are the scans of the Doctor's physiology,' she announced.

'What does this teach us?' asked the Committee. 'He has a secondary cardiovascular system. What value is that?' The Doctor was horrified at where this looked like it was going. 'None!' he shouted at the speaker. 'None at all!'

Allan held the camera with one hand and pointed at a specific picture with the other. 'But look here,' she called. 'Near the base of the cranium. There's a smaller additional tertiary lobe to the brain.'

'Meaning?' the Committee prompted her.

'It deals with all bodily and motor functions.'

‘Allowing all other parts of the brain to optimise all calculation and data assessment.’

‘Exactly.’

The Doctor tried to stop it going any further. ‘That’s no good to you!’ he protested. ‘I’m not human. Unclean and unfit.’

But the Committee did not agree. ‘This is the final link,’ it said as it realised what Allan was getting at.

‘I can replicate it,’ Allan concluded. ‘Reproduce it in all future Cyber-processing, base our entire project on this one template.’

‘What?’ the Doctor gasped, realising that Allan’s intention was to solve the problems encountered by Cyberconversion by adding just a little of him into the mixture.

‘No more needless organ rejection and failure,’ Allan declared as if she were advertising.

But the Committee was already buying. ‘Agreed,’ it said. ‘Begin your work immediately.’

The Doctor sat up. ‘No!’ he shouted. ‘I will not be the template for your monstrous parodies of human kind!’

‘But Doctor,’ Allan enthused, ‘you wanted to help and you’ve done it. You’ve saved us all!’
The Doctor wasn’t having it. ‘No one’s saved,’ he snapped.

‘Summon the people,’ boomed the Committee. ‘Begin the processing.’

‘Listen to me!’ the Doctor roared.
But it wasn’t listening to anyone. ‘We will survive,’ it declared. ‘The new Cyber Race will be invincible.’

Priorities

A dead Cyberman lay on the patterned carpet, its mask ripped off, head lolling to one side, empty half-closed hands resting palms-down like cats' paws. Its dead eyes were fixed on Dad Hartley's feet, encased in brown carpet slippers and grey socks. The old man sat in his armchair in absolute silence, his hands resting on the chair arms, his head back, eyes closed. He could not bear to look at the lump of plastic, metal and displaced flesh lying on the floor of his living room. There was a time when he could have stared at his daughter's pretty face for hours, become lost in her eyes, taken in and savoured every tiny detail of her features. But this he could not bear to see. This was no Yvonne Hartley that he knew. The dead thing at his feet had been Yvonne once, that much was certain, but now the

point where scrap metal ended and corpse began was indeterminable. Nyssa was gone, the closest thing he had to Yvonne, a pretty young chestnut-haired girl with a warm smile and a kind nature, dragged away by creatures that walked and talked in the same abnormal, stunted way that *she* had done just before she died, albeit without her pain and distress. They felt nothing, no remorse at their destruction of his front door and the abduction of his guest, no sadness over the death of Yvonne, no pain, no misery, no torment and no anguish.

Dad Hartley wished for a moment that he could be as invulnerable.

Frank stood by the mantelpiece looking down at him, equally distraught at the terrible memories surrounding the shape on the floor, but now in the third stage of his grief: the stage at which one realises that sitting around moping about it is pointless and that the best thing to do would be to get going again. 'Dad, you can't just sit there,' he tried to persuade his father.

'I can't leave Yvonne,' Dad said. He wondered why he still used her name, still

thought of the dead Cyberman as Yvonne. He wanted to hold onto some part of her but knew in his heart that everything that was good and kind and sweet and funny and wonderful about his daughter had been flushed out of her brain during the process of her augmentation. 'She's back home.' He opened his eyes and looked up. 'Put the kettle on.'

'Nyssa's been taken away,' Frank said. He knew his father knew that.

Dad didn't even react to the information, though that wasn't because it wasn't new. He was completely consumed with thoughts of Yvonne. He finally looked down at the dead Cyberman. 'Poor little Vonnie,' he said. 'And what harm did you ever do anyone, eh? None at all. Not one bit. And now you look like a road accident.' He looked up at Frank, his eyes serious, accusing. 'That's what you wanted to be,' he said, pointing down at the cybernetic rubbish heap. 'What you wanted.'

Frank suddenly recalled the arguments he'd had with his father about wanting to volunteer for the surface parties. They had argued for hours, often losing their tempers and

shouting, upsetting Yvonne. Frank had said unkind things when his father had refused to allow it and warned him that no one ever came back from the surface. He wished he'd listened. He wished he hadn't been so angry with his father. He wished he hadn't been so spiteful to Yvonne.

He wished he *had* been called up. That way it would be him down there on the floor, and Dad and Yvonne could be together.

Commander Zheng pulled the straps binding the Doctor to the conveyor tighter. The Doctor gritted his teeth and struggled to get free, going red in the face. It was doing him no good. Zheng's incredible strength beat him easily. Satisfied that the task was done, Zheng turned and left without a word of explanation. Probably a call from the Committee.

'Don't struggle, Doctor,' said Doctorman Allan as she programmed a large arc-shaped canopy device with its instructions. 'This is just a more detailed body scan. It won't hurt for long.'

‘I will not let you create a race in my image,’ the Doctor hissed violently. ‘Especially that race. Cybermen – so bloated with machine parts only logic stifles the natural urge to scream in agony! How can you do that to your own people?’ he demanded of Allan.

‘Because we’re *dying!*’ Allan retorted. ‘That’s why we’re screaming. We’ve been trapped down here so long. We daren’t even step out onto our own planet’s surface. Just the thought of the vast, empty sky drives us insane. Only the Cybermen can go out there and save us.’

‘Save you?’ The Doctor still wrestled with his restraints. ‘That means nothing to them! You have no idea what you’re creating!’

Allan shook her head. ‘No Cybermen, no life.’ She came around to the Doctor’s side and attached a small electrode to his forehead with a sticky adhesive pad. ‘Unless you have a better solution.’

‘I will not assist you in creating monsters,’ the Doctor growled.

But he knew by now that he wasn’t about to be given a choice in the matter.

‘Zheng,’ said the Committee. ‘Turbulence from the nebula is increasing. Why delay in testing the propulsion system?’

‘The power capacitors are only at seventy-one per-cent storage,’ Zheng explained.

‘That is sufficient,’ the Committee informed it.

But Zheng was not satisfied. ‘Power is needed to restore the shields in the damaged roof of the city,’ it told its unified master.

The Committee began to deliberate. ‘The city must survive,’ argued one voice.

‘The course of Mondas must be altered,’ countered another.

‘The propulsion system takes priority,’ the first voice insisted.

‘A sacrifice must be made,’ said another voice, offering a possible option. It was right, of course. The Cybermen could not repair the city roof and the planet’s engine at the same time with such low power, and delaying on either would certainly doom it. The Committee would have to choose which should be saved and which lost. But the

members could not decide. 'This juncture the Committee does not agree,' it informed Zheng.

Zheng decided to try to make the decision for it. An extra mind, an external point of view, could tip the balance of the disagreement one way or the other. 'The roof must be repaired,' it said, 'or the people will not survive.'

The Committee considered its options, and while running through the data came up with something. 'There is another solution,' it told Zheng. 'All citizens of Mondas must be fully processed.' As Cybermen they would survive in the frozen city where ordinary flesh and blood would not endure. 'Begin with police and nursing staff. Start the work immediately.' Its spotlight vaulted up into the chamber roof and dimmed, leaving the Committee in darkness as Zheng strode off to carry out its orders.

Finally Dad Hartley had found the strength to get to his feet. Through the broken front door the cold was reaching the living room, and even the hottest, freshest cup of tea was

cooling to a state at which it was undrinkable in seconds, and that infuriated him. He crouched by the door's hinges with a screwdriver, hoping to be able to fix it. His fingers were numb and he was shivering, and Frank could see it. 'Come inside, Dad,' he begged, thinking that if they shut the internal doors and blocked the gaps under them with cushions they could keep the heat from the electric heater in.

Dad looked outside through the broken door and pointed down into the city. Ice and snow lay everywhere, covered the centre of the city and spread outward in a growing radius. It had even reached the old church where the Doctor had started the bell. It would soon bury the entire city. Dad stood up, abandoning the door. 'We can't stay here,' he said finally. 'The best thing to do would be to seek shelter elsewhere, if there were any safe places left.'

'I wish we could find Nyssa,' mumbled Frank regretfully. 'She has this place where we'd all be safe.'

Dad shook his head. 'It'll be the same for her as little Vonnie. No doubts, lad. This is the end.'

A chime sounded from down the street, and as the Hartleys looked out they could see a small horse-drawn van with a loudspeaker on the side. 'All citizens! Attention!' boomed the mechanised voice of a policeman amplified by the speaker. 'State of emergency is being declared. Shelter will be provided in the Committee Palace.'

'Shelter!' Dad snorted. 'Who are they trying to kid? Shelter. Huh!' He knew as soon as he and Frank got inside that palace they'd be halfway to ending up like Yvonne. The van trundled along in the wake of its horses, the speaker continuing to broadcast its message to the city.

We Are The Future

There was another tremor and Doctorman Allan steadied herself by leaning on the machine that was about to all but devour the Doctor. The effects of the booze were wearing off now and her anxiety was flooding back as quickly as her concentration. 'That turbulence is getting stronger,' she observed as she fitted electrodes to the backs of the Doctor's hands.

'Of course it is,' the Doctor replied. 'Forget Cyberprocessing. Just get the planet's propulsion system working.' It hadn't occurred to him that by now such was the state of the city that unless processed the people would die and the propulsion system would be surplus to requirements.

The door of the consultation room slid open and a Cyberman marched in holding a prisoner. ‘Doctor!’ the detainee cried with sudden relief.

‘Nyssa!’ the Doctor’s emotional reaction mirrored hers as he looked up at her.

Allan looked at the girl too. Her clothes were untidy, as was her hair, but her cheeks were rosy instead of pallid and she looked like she got decent meals every day. ‘Who’s this?’ Allan demanded of the Cyberman.

‘Another intruder detained by the police,’ the Cyberman explained. ‘She will be interrogated by Commander Zheng.’

Still in the Cyberman’s vice-like grip, Nyssa looked worriedly down at the Doctor. ‘Why are you strapped down? What are they doing?’ The Doctor didn’t answer, deciding it would be best not to give any explanations. Instead he saw Nyssa’s arrival as an opportunity to try something. ‘Doctorman Allan,’ he said. ‘This is my friend, Nyssa. We can both help you.’

‘Help *them*?’ asked Nyssa with indignation.

‘Yes, Nyssa,’ the Doctor nodded as best he could, quickly curtailing her protest. ‘With

your unrivalled experience of bioengineering. Stem cell tissue culture, to grow spare parts.'

Allan was surprised. Could this tiny girl, little more than a teenager, be a talented biochemist? 'Is that true?' she asked.

'She is required by CyberCommander Zheng,' the Cyberman insisted.

Allan couldn't take the chance. If what the Doctor said about this girl was true, she could be the most valuable commodity to fall into Mondasian hands since... well, since her friend the Doctor. 'No,' Allan said firmly. 'I'll deal with her. Go back to your duties.' The Cyberman was still and silent. 'Well go on!' Allan snapped, shoving it with her hands. 'I have storerooms full of old bones that need grinding up for nutrient.'

The Cyberman finally relented, letting go of Nyssa's wrist. 'Yes, Doctorman Allan,' it buzzed and plodded out into the corridor.

Nyssa looked down at the wires and electrodes all over the Doctor's face and hands, snaking up to the canopy at his feet and disappearing inside. 'Doctor, why are you wired up to this machine?' she said in a

panicked voice. 'They're not Cyberprocessing you!'

The Doctor managed to shake his head just a little. 'Not yet. What's going on outside?'

'The city's frozen over,' Nyssa said.

Allan was worried. 'What?'

Nyssa looked up at her. 'There's a breach in the roof and the frozen atmosphere is spilling in,' she explained. Allan had been in the palace during the breach and had therefore missed it. 'It'll soon be uninhabitable.'

'Except for Cybermen,' said the Doctor, finally in the completion of his knowledge aware of the gravity of the situation.

'The processing destroys personalities,' Nyssa said, close to tears. 'It killed poor Yvonne Hartley. I was there.'

'It's only for selected workers on the surface,' blustered Allan, worried that there were more people being processed than were supposed to be.

But Zheng cleared that up for her, marching into the room. 'Doctorman Allan, the Committee orders full processing of the population to begin immediately,' it announced.

‘You see?’ muttered the Doctor, unable to bask in the triumph of being right because he knew what it meant.

Allan was arguing with Zheng again. ‘But we don’t have facilities for that many!’ she protested.

‘The vaults beneath the palace have been adapted,’ Zheng explained, reminding the Doctor of Thomas Dodd’s glib remark about the wine cellar. Where was Dodd now, he wondered. ‘And my squad have been programmed for surgical duties.’

Allan gawked. ‘When did that happen? They never told me!’ She paused, realising how dire the situation was, and finally decided to procrastinate. ‘Well tell them the new Cyber-template isn’t scanned yet.’

Zheng indicated the Doctor with a hand. ‘The subject is here,’ it said plainly. ‘Start immediately.’

‘Doctor?’ asked Nyssa, concerned by what she’d just heard. ‘What template?’

‘Er, quiet Nyssa,’ the Doctor dismissed her. But Zheng had already noticed her. ‘Who is this?’ it asked.

‘Leave her alone, Zheng,’ the Doctor shouted up to the giant.

It came to its own conclusion. ‘This is the intruder I was to interrogate.’ That was the only logical possibility after Zheng had linked up to Mondas’s population database and failed to find her.

‘Apparently she understands our work,’ Allan interjected. ‘And since you deprived me of Sisterman Constant I need her skills.’

The room shook again, more violently this time, and Allan and Nyssa collided with each other. But Zheng didn’t even sway. ‘Doctorman Allan, you are relieved of duty,’ it announced. ‘I will start the scan myself.’ It started to press buttons on the machine.

‘That’s my job!’ yelled Allan.

The trolley bed started on the conveyor, and the Doctor slid inside the machine. Nyssa cried out after him, but he was gone. Nyssa rounded on Zheng. ‘Bring him back!’ she demanded.

‘How dare you, Zheng!’ roared Allan, storming over to it. ‘All this is *my* work. *I created you!*’

‘And I am superior to you,’ Zheng replied with utter cold simplicity. ‘Be proud while you still have the capacity.’

Arcs of energy like those produced by Tesla coils flashed from the curved interior of the scanner, touching the electrodes on the Doctor’s hands, face and forehead and making him cry out in pain. The information taken by the scanner was fed directly to the Committee, and in the light of the new information it decided some questions needed answering and it would be the one to start asking them. ‘Who are you?’ it asked the Doctor.

‘I’m not your saviour, that’s for certain!’ the Doctor shouted at it. ‘Get out of my head!’

‘You have resources that we need,’ the Committee replied by way of explanation as to why it would not do as he desired.

‘How did it start?’ the Doctor hissed, deriding the mechanical collective. ‘A few hip replacements and breast implants? Vanity’s a killer, isn’t it? And how will it end? Sleek, heartless scavengers cobbled up out of space junk and other people’s bodies! But you’ll

look ever so stylish.' Another energy bolt was delivered into the electrode on his forehead and he screamed.

'The speed of natural development is insufficient,' the Committee said, oddly making an effort to justify itself to the Doctor on the issue of Cybermen. 'We have taken charge of our own evolution.'

'Excellent!' crowed the Doctor, sarcastic even in the face of terror. 'Abolish doctors! Someone call a mechanic!'

The Committee was puzzled. 'Who is he?' asked one voice.

'He is a threat,' said another.

'Why is he here?' asked a third.

'Is he the solution?' Another voice.

'Who sent him?' Another.

The Doctor could hear the voices, divided despite their welding together in the obscene engine of which they had become part. 'You've no unity,' he told them. 'And logic alone can never change Mondas's course. The nebula will destroy you! You're finished!'

'You entered our world,' the Committee inferred. 'You have the means to evacuate our people. Assist us.'

It hadn't asked nicely. 'I will not be a part of your future!' the Doctor screamed. 'The conveyor started to roll again, but not releasing the Doctor back into Doctorman Allan's room; instead it started to move deeper into the machine. 'What are you doing?' the Doctor shouted worriedly.

'You cannot resist,' the Committee said. 'You will be like us.'

'I will *never* be like you!' the Doctor roared. He knew how to stop his hearts, and he would gladly do it if they began to process him. Once the conversion was underway they would never start again.

The Committee disconnected from its link with the Doctor's brain. 'He is a threat,' confirmed a voice.

'He is incorrect,' added another.

'He will be processed into the Cyber Race.'

'Logic is clean.'

'Logic is truth and strength.'

The computer banks exchanged more information, more updates, and assisted the Committee in reaching its conclusions. 'To change and plan we need unity,' its first voice said.

‘Disjunction must be rejected,’ added its second. ‘Disjunction means extinction.’

Nineteen of the voices merged into one again, leaving only the first voice separated, but in their minds they were as one. ‘Agreed,’ the nineteen vocally-merged Committee members said as a whole, as an individual consciousness. ‘Extinction is futile. Logic must be embraced.’

‘Conjunction is strength,’ said the lead voice. ‘We are the future.’

‘We are the future!’ the rest chorused in reply. ‘We are the future! We are the future! We are the future!’

‘We are in conjunction,’ declared the first voice. ‘The Cyber Race is secure.’

A Personal Stake

‘How much longer?’

Nyssa felt like she had waited hours for the scan to finish, though in truth the Doctor had only been inside the machine for a few minutes. She felt anxious and worried. She was terrified that the Doctor was at that very moment being converted into a Cyberman. And what a terrible Cyberman he would make! The knowledge he possessed would turn a race of giants into a race of gods.

‘The scan is almost complete,’ Zheng told her, checking the instruments.

Nyssa turned to Doctorman Allan. ‘And then we can get the Doctor out of there, can’t we, Dr Allan?’

‘Don’t ask me,’ Allan shrugged. She knew the answer but enjoyed keeping the girl in

suspense, allowing her to sweat. It was an amusing diversion. 'I'm relieved of duty.' She opened a locker under her small desk and took out a dark green bottle and a soiled glass. A Cyberman entered. 'Commander,' it said to Zheng, 'the civilians are waiting at the open gates.'

'I will come,' replied Zheng, knowing that it would be needed to supervise the processing and maintain order. 'Doctorman, oversee the scanning process.'

'Need me now, do you?' Allan sneered as Zheng marched out. At least it had gone and left her in charge. She put her glass down and looked over to Nyssa. The girl couldn't take her eyes off that machine.

The two surviving Hartleys stood in the Square, heavy coats and scarves on but still shivering, listening to the stone sky rumbling as if upset by thunder. There were flashes high up in the distance, explosions in the roof, probably making more holes and letting more of the lethal ice from the surface pour into the last surviving city on the planet. There were

others in the Square too, citizens who, like the Hartleys, had not felt that they should be forced into taking shelter in the Committee palace. They did not know what the Hartleys knew about the dangers there, but that didn't mean they'd allow themselves to be driven in. Some of them were going mad with the cold, and others were trying to find ways to keep warm. A few frustrated people had gathered around the enormous Holiday tree, which looked more like a Christmas tree than ever now that it was covered with snow, trying to chop it down with tools taken from their homes, hoping to make a fire. Many of them were shocked and disgusted to discover that it was as synthetic as the trees they all had at home, a giant fake made of plastic. The Hartleys watched but took no part in it. 'How much longer, Dad?' asked Frank, rubbing his hands together and blowing on them. 'It's so cold.'

'As long as it takes, lad,' Dad Hartley answered vehemently, seeming in his determination unaffected by the cold. 'We stand out here until they learn. We don't come to their whistle like programmed Cybermats.'

There was a sudden clattering noise in the distance, a rhythmic beat of armoured hooves coming closer. The police horses raced toward the crowd and people started to back away in panic, looking for somewhere to run to.

Zheng stood on a small balcony above the main entrance to the palace like a king on the ramparts of his castle, looking down at the milling crowd below. Some had dutifully gathered at the opening gates in response to the offer of shelter, while others held back in the Square beyond. ‘Even the unprocessed crowd has a certain logic,’ It told two other Cybermen standing behind it, as if mimicking that king of the castle briefing his generals on an important battle plan. Zheng watched the riders it had sent out surrounding the Square and hemming in the crowd, leaving the people trapped with only one direction to take. ‘If they refuse the open gates, we use their emotional responses against them and drive them in. Order all squads to be ready for intake of recruits.’

‘Yes, Commander,’ one of the other Cybermen said, turning and stepping inside. Zheng continued to watch the throng outside. Some of them shouted and cried, most shivered, all were afraid. They would soon recover from their malady. Processing would ensure that they never again would have to be anxious or frightened, or feel the cold.

Nyssa watched the lights go out on the scanner one by one until the last flickered and died, and the hum of power faded with it. She glanced at Allan, who was still drinking. ‘Has it finished?’

‘Oh, long ago,’ Allan sighed. ‘Not my problem.’

Nyssa felt around the hatch covering the tube into which the Doctor had vanished, looking for an opening catch or something. ‘Help me get the Doctor out!’ she said desperately.

‘It’s automatic,’ said Allan.

Nyssa jumped as the hatch snapped open. She caught herself and peered inside. ‘There was no one there. ‘He’s gone!’ she gasped. ‘What’s happened to him?’

‘Oh, bless him,’ Allan laughed cruelly. She knew that nothing had happened to the Doctor, but she delighted in taunting Nyssa. She had used to capture spiders when she was a little girl and pull their legs off one by one. ‘Let’s open another bottle and toast his most excellent health!’ And she reached for her locker.

Nyssa was horrified. ‘You tricked him!’ she cried. ‘He’s been processed!’

The door of the consultation room buzzed open and a Cyberman walked in. It was gleaming, brand new, and its movements were fluid and almost graceful, like those of an athlete, rather than the jerky, spasmodic motions exhibited by all previous Cybermen including Zheng. ‘My programming is complete,’ it announced.

Allan’s jaw dropped. ‘Incredible...’ she breathed, staring up at it. ‘I was right. The movement’s much more fluid.’

‘D-Doctor?’ gibbered Nyssa, feeling like she was going to cry.

‘They normally need *days* to readjust,’ Allan continued, ignoring the whining brat. She’d become boring now.

‘I await orders,’ said the Cyberman.

‘Just wait, then,’ Allan snapped at it.

Nyssa looked up at the blank silken mask of the Cyberman. ‘Doctor?’ she called. ‘Is that you?’ She heard Allan laughing at her and whirled round. ‘Stop it!’ she sobbed. ‘It’s horrible!’

Something on the Cyberman’s chest unit beeped. ‘I am summoned,’ it announced and turned to leave.

‘Wait!’ Allan called, diving between it and the door. ‘I need to run tests!’

‘Stand aside,’ ordered the Cyberman and gave Allan a good shove, almost knocking her off her feet. Then it marched out and let the door close.

Nyssa watched it go. ‘Doctor?’ she whispered, feeling sick and dizzy, wondering how she would ever cope if the Doctor truly had become the first of the new generation of Cybermen.

The crowd swayed in every direction, backing up and then surging out only to be blocked by the circling horses, and then backing away

again. They were bottlenecked, held in place with only one exit – the path that led to the Committee palace. Many stood firm, stubbornly refusing to move, but that had been planned for. Lights in the distance, beyond the horses, bobbed about eight feet off the ground, getting closer. As they appeared out of the misty ice vapour their blurry image resolved into hard and clearly defined lines. Giant men in plastic suits with huge boxy chest units, with thick metal tubes coming out of their heads and massive ring clamps on their joints marched toward the crowd. ‘Cybermen!’ shouted Frank, remembering the name Nyssa had given them when they were watching television and then again when Yvonne had come home. ‘It’s a trap!’ he shouted as loudly as he could, trying to warn his neighbours and friends. But it wasn’t working. The Cybermen formed a pincer and funnelled the crowd into a narrow rank that backed toward the open gates of the palace.

‘They’re forcing us inside the palace grounds!’ Dad cried as he and Frank were swept up in the rout.

‘Do not resist,’ the Cybermen chorused as they advanced relentlessly. ‘Form into groups for processing.’ Whips started to crack, people screamed, and everyone moved back toward the gates.

Dad Hartley tried to shuffle out of the line and find an escape route. ‘No parade of walking wounded tells me what to do!’ he shouted at the Cybermen.

But the whip flashed out, and after a scream he was silenced.

Zheng had returned to the Committee chamber, where the dancing spotlight was dancing again, bouncing around in the air, swinging its beam over the twenty shrivelled and decaying faces. Zheng experienced no disgust at the sight of them. It had no capacity for such things. ‘Commander Zheng,’ the Committee said. ‘Give your report.’

‘The crowd are resisting our troops,’ Zheng answered.

‘More power must go to the processing section,’ the Committee commanded. ‘Resistance must be crushed.’

‘The propulsion system is ready for testing,’ Zheng updated its master from information it had received from the work crews. ‘Power must be redirected from processing.’

‘The security of the CyberPlanner overrides all tasks,’ the Committee announced. The floating spotlight swooped down and projected its beam onto a space on the floor between the Committee and Zheng. A tall cylindrical machine stood there, part metallic, part crystalline, with wires and tubes, oscillators and filaments. It had been prepared especially for such an eventuality as this. It was a super-computer that contained all of the knowledge of the Committee itself plus that of many great scientists and designers from early on in the project. Doctorman Allan had even at one point made her contribution. The CyberPlanner’s function was that of a coordinator – a principal organiser with the power to keep all Cybermen informed, controlled and prepared. Zheng had known about it, even assisted with its construction, but had not been aware that its activation had been authorised. ‘Obey your orders,’ the Committee said finally to Zheng. Then the

lights went out again and the CyberCommander left.

With the Doctor gone, Nyssa decided it was up to her. He would want her to go on, to try and finish the job he'd started. 'There must be a way to stop the Committee,' she declared resolutely.

'Who cares?' slurred Allan, drunk again. 'We might as well join the queue for processing now.'

'The Doctor would care,' replied Nyssa, refusing to give ground.

'Let's have a drink,' Allan said casually, filling her glass and pushing it across the desk towards Nyssa before taking a swig from the bottle in the absence of a second glass. 'Anything to encourage oblivion.'

'Please, listen to me!' Nyssa said, slamming her hands down on the desk. The glass tipped over, spilling wine everywhere, and then rolled off the desk and smashed on the floor. 'He's gone! The Doctor's dead, worse than dead, and Adric's dead too. So many people killed because of your Cybermen. So where's the

Committee? I have to stop this once and for all.'

'The Doctor was a gift,' Allan sighed. 'I knew I was right. I should thank him. He was our last resort.'

'Oh dear!' the Doctor said breezily as the door slid open and he strode in. 'You make me sound like Southend-on-Seal!'

Nyssa could barely believe her eyes. 'Doctor!' she cried, rushing up to him and flinging her arms around him. 'Oh, Doctor, I thought you'd been processed.'

'I could hear you right up the corridor,' the Doctor said with a smile.

'You didn't come out of the machine,' gabbled Nyssa. 'And then a Cyberman came in!'

'And you thought it was me?' said the Doctor with surprise. 'Oh, Nyssa!' He shook his head in disappointment. She was usually such a rational girl.

'That was the first recruit copied from the new template,' Allan said proudly. 'You knew him, Doctor. Thomas Dodd.'

The Doctor felt a pang of sadness. 'Where is he now?'

‘Oh,’ hooted Allan. ‘It’s a “he” when it’s someone you know! *He* and the template are automatically deployed on the processing lines.’

‘Get them back!’ the Doctor demanded.

‘Impossible,’ retorted Allan. ‘Then she simply embarked upon an outburst of drunken bluster. ‘I thought I was creating new life, saving the people. I never wanted an award! And my Cybermen are so amazing – powerful, intricate – but I destroyed their souls.’

‘And every Cyberman I ever met, will ever meet, is based on me,’ the Doctor said with disgust.

‘I created an army of animated corpses,’ Allan burbled on. ‘And the Committee will process every last human rather than waste power on the propulsion system.’

The Doctor was surprised. ‘Then you agree it must be stopped?’

‘Stopped?’ echoed Allan. ‘It can’t be stopped. I made them invincible.’

The Doctor wasn’t so sure. ‘What about your medical supplies?’ he asked, an inkling of a plan forming in his brain. ‘There are vats out

there that supply the Committee's nutrient.' He had passed them on the way back to this room after finding himself delivered by the scanner to the Committee chamber. 'If we add something to weaken its resolve...'

Allan shook her head. 'The Cybermen hold all the medical stores.'

'Well, there must be something,' the Doctor persisted.

Nyssa was looking at the desk, a pool of dark red liquid spreading across it and dripping off the corners onto the floor. 'Doctor, the wine!' she exclaimed, pointing to the bottle in front of Allan.

'Nyssa,' the Doctor grinned. 'You are incomparable!' He lunged for the bottle. 'Wine from the old regime, I assume?' He remembered Dodd's remark about the cellar again. 'How much is left?'

'They're my bottles!' shrieked Allan, snatching the almost empty bottle from the Doctor's hand and cradling it protectively. 'A small cellar. I won't let you have them.'

The Doctor held out a hand to Allan, silently demanding the bottle back. 'A few bottles, or

the whole planet?’ he asked. ‘It’s not a choice, is it, Doctorman?’

Allan looked into his eyes. He was mad. He would get them all killed. But what else was there? They were all probably going to die anyway. She handed him the bottle.

Sabotage

The crowd became more and more anxious as further tremors shook the roof. All of the policemen had gone away to be fully processed and only Cybermen, some of them mounted on the augmented horses, were left to drive all the citizens into the palace. Many had relented and gone in, but there were plenty still fighting against the lashing whips and the commands of emotionless voices, trying to get away. Frank Hartley was one of them, and he had found a ledge running from the ground at the foot of the iron fence that surrounded the palace. He had climbed up onto it, hoping that it would lead around the outside, allowing for a chance of escape via the back. He grabbed reached down to grab his father's hand. 'Dad!' he called. 'Up here!'

The whip flashed out and caught Dad Hartley's flesh and blood arm and he yelled in pain. He looked up and saw two Cybermen on the ledge behind Frank, a little way away, edging towards him. 'Not that way!' he shouted.

'Move away!' ordered one of the Cybermen, coming into whipping distance and lashing out at Frank. 'Move away!' Frank's shoulder caught the blow and he screamed and fell off the ledge.

As his father picked him up off the ground a tremendous explosion rang out overhead. Fragments of stone were flung in all directions. One large chunk hit a woman in the crowd squarely on the side of the head and she collapsed, unconscious. A Cyberman approached and picked her up. At least in this state she would not struggle and could be carried into the palace. She would not wake up until she had been processed, and then she would remain perfectly calm. There was another bang, another fierce tremor, and suddenly a mass of snow and ice cascaded in heavy sheets onto the ground below, covering the Square instantly and spreading toward the

palace. Frank looked up. 'The ice,' he cried in horror. 'It's coming in!'

Despite his reservations, Dad Hartley finally accepted that there was no other way to go. He dashed over to the palace gates and waved to the crowd to follow him. 'Quick, everybody!' he shouted. 'Inside!'

As the sky split open, people in the crowd finally ceased their resistance and ran for the gates. The Cybermen stopped whipping them and marched or rode inside steadily, falling into a perfectly orderly rank.

The Doctor, Nyssa and Doctorman Allan had met with no obstructions on their way to the nutrient processing unit that fed the Committee. There were no Cybermen in the corridors; they were all busy collecting up and processing the remaining citizens, and with the human staff long since evacuated (though by now certainly returning to the palace as prisoners of the Cybermen) there was no one at all to stop them and ask what they were doing. In their arms they carried large thick cardboard boxes, each filled with bottles of

the rich, heavy wine from Doctorman Allan's stash. As they entered the nutrient processing unit they dumped the heavy packages on the floor, careful not to break the bottles, and caught their breath. The Doctor looked out across the unit. He and his party stood on a gantry that ran like a bridge from one side of the unit to the other, and below that bridge lay a large open floor crowded with huge cylindrical metal vats. The vats were filled almost to the brim with brownish slime from which steam rose as mechanical pistons reached down from above with churning gears attached to grind up the old bones and other graveyard detritus into liquid. Metal pipes ran out of each vat and these connected to thick black rubbery tubes. Through these the processed sustenance would pass into the Committee chamber and arrive inside the machine, where all the vital nutrition would be separated from it and the waste discarded into something akin to a Sabatier furnace, the nutrition pumped into the rotting bodies of the Committee members and helping to prolong their existence. This, the Doctor knew, was the Committee's Achilles heel.

Interfering with this would be the one certain way to do it lasting and effective harm. He pulled bottles out of the packages, popped out corks and handed them to Nyssa. 'I'll open them, you pour them in,' he instructed.

Nyssa looked down into the vats, screwing up her face in repulsion. 'What is all that stuff?'

'Nutrients for the Committee,' the Doctor replied. 'Rich in calcium.' He opened two more bottles.

'You can't stop them like that,' protested Allan, more interested in saving her bottles than the possible consequences for the Committee.

'But a Mickey Finn might slow them up a bit,' the Doctor replied optimistically. 'Nyssa?' Nyssa tipped the bottles in her hands up, pouring the wine over the side of the gantry into the vats below.

Allan was horrified. 'Give me that bottle!' she demanded, lunging to grab one that the Doctor was opening, but he jumped back out of reach. She looked down at her cardboard box on the floor. 'I should never have let you near all this!' she sobbed. 'Give it to me!' she tried to snatch a bottle from Nyssa.

‘No!’ Nyssa shouted, leaning on the rail with her arms stretched out to make sure that Allan couldn’t reach. ‘You’re pathetic. The Doctor’s trying to save you and your world. Either help or leave us alone.’

Allan was sobering up. ‘I can’t be part of this,’ she murmured, shaking her head. ‘They’ll listen to me. I’ll *make* them stop!’ and she turned and ran back up the gantry.

‘Thank you, Nyssa,’ the Doctor smiled, passing her two more open bottles.

She tipped them in. ‘She could cause trouble.’

‘Well, we are threatening her children.’

‘We can’t just destroy a whole race.’

‘A race reborn partly in my image. I feel it’s my right to try and redirect its evolution.’ He thrust more bottles into her hands. ‘Keep pouring.’

‘Doctor, if Cybermen are the only way these people can survive...’ Nyssa asked as she poured, emptying the bottles and standing them on the walkway next to the boxes.

The Doctor cut off the remainder of her argument. ‘It isn’t the only way,’ he said.

‘I thought we couldn’t change history?’ Nyssa recalled the argument she and the

Doctor had had in the TARDIS before the Cybermat attacked the console.

‘This place,’ the Doctor said, looking up and around at the dusty, musty, cracked and stained walls of the unit. ‘All decay and despair. It feels like an end, yet you and I know what’s coming afterwards. So it’s not an ending; just an alternative.’

Nyssa was confused. ‘So we definitely can’t change history?’

‘Who says?’ the Doctor replied flippantly. ‘I think history’s old enough to take care of itself, don’t you?’ He handed her another of the dark green bottles. ‘Keep pouring.’

Still confused and unsure of what she was doing or what the consequences would be, Nyssa went by her instincts and trusted the Doctor. She reached out over the rail, bottle in hand, and tipped it up.

Zheng was in an office talking to a Cyberman up on the surface. There was a machine on the desk of the office it had commandeered similar to a telephone but with a small video screen set into an upper section of it. The

image of the other Cyberman showed on the screen but the telephone receiver still had to be picked up if one wished to talk and listen. Zheng looked peculiar holding the black handset just below its cranial tube where its ears should have been. 'Commander Zheng,' the voice on the other end of the phone buzzed. 'Surface bombardment is increasing. We cannot sustain here. The propulsion system must be activated.'

'Hold your position,' ordered Zheng.

'We need the power now,' argued the surface Cyberman.

'Hold your position,' Zheng repeated. 'I will obtain the order.' It left the office and almost collided with a running, panicking Doctorman Allan, who came to a halt directly in its path. 'Stand aside, Doctorman Allan,' it ordered.

'Zheng,' she panted desperately. 'You must come quickly. It's the Doctor. He's trying to poison...'

Zheng ignored her outburst. It had a question for her, a question it conceded no Cyberman could answer. 'Which is more important?' it asked. 'The Committee or the planet?'

‘What?’ gasped Allan, completely surprised by the sudden philosophical attitude taken by the Commander. She resolved herself quickly and replied, ‘Well that’s obvious. Only the Committee has the power to save us. *My* Committee.’ She hadn’t really created it as such, nor been the first person to make cybernetic augmentations to it, but hers had been the only augmentations to which the members’ physiologies had adapted. Hers had been the only augmentations that had helped them each to still be alive after reaching the age of one hundred and seventy-nine and linked all their brains together in a singular organising principle. Like the Cybermen, the Committee had been around when she was a little girl, even before that, but like the Cybermen, it had not truly become immortal until her mind had been put to the task of improving upon it.

But Zheng had other ideas. It had wanted her answer because it had known that the answer given by an emotional, irrational human being would surely be the wrong one, and that meant that the alternative answer would be right and the decision made thus. ‘You are

wrong,' Zheng told Allan. 'Stand aside.' It barged past her, slamming her to the wall, and proceeded down the corridor.

'Wait!' she shouted after it. 'The Committee must be warned. Just listen!' she ran to catch it up.

Once the corridor was empty, a door slid open and Frank Hartley emerged from another of the cupboards where the body containment suits were kept. 'I thought they'd got us then,' he whispered. 'Dad?'

'Horrible place,' Dad grumbled as he shuffled out of the cupboard. 'Horrible plastic suits on racks.' He shut the door. 'Forcing my little Vonnie into one of them,' he moaned sadly.

Frank had just caught a glimpse of Zheng and Doctorman Allan disappearing through a door at the end of the corridor. 'That woman was on the telly!' he exclaimed with surprise.

'And the big robot too,' said Dad. He hadn't yet adjusted to calling them Cybermen. 'They were heading for the Committee by the sound of it.' He started off after them.

Frank stalled him with a hand. 'But she said the Doctor,' he said urgently.

‘Nyssa’s friend?’ Dad remembered.

‘She came from that way,’ he nodded and pointed back up the corridor. ‘Maybe Nyssa’s there too.’

Dad thought he would like to see Nyssa again. He nodded and followed Frank.

The vats were churning and bubbling and the stench of the vapour was worse now it had been mixed with the stuff in the bottles. All of the bottles were empty and Nyssa was packing them away into their cardboard boxes. The Doctor stepped back. ‘Good,’ he declared with satisfaction. ‘That’s probably enough wine to stew a herd of *boeuf bourguignon*.’

Nyssa had no idea what *boeuf bourguignon* might be. ‘So we wait,’ she said, walking up the gantry. There was a door at the far end with an alcove off it, and in the alcove there was a smashed window. Nyssa heard the Doctor’s footfalls behind her as she looked down at the pile of ice and snow with corners of a few rooftops poking out here and there. ‘Look at it,’ she said sadly. ‘Half the city’s gone.’ She turned to face the Doctor.

‘Buried under the glacier,’ the Doctor nodded. ‘We must change Mondas’s course. It might ride out one ‘Tsunami, but not an endless Blitz of them.’

Suddenly Nyssa screamed. The Doctor turned and found himself facing a Cyberman that had come up the stairs to the gantry after hearing voices and deciding to investigate. ‘All civilians are required for processing,’ it announced, reaching for both of them.

‘We’re not civilians,’ the Doctor said, dodging it. ‘Take us to the Committee. I want a word.’

‘You are required for processing,’ the Cyberman insisted and grabbed the Doctor’s wrist.

‘Let go of him!’ cried Nyssa. But the Cyberman grabbed her wrist with its other hand.

‘Do not resist,’ it said. ‘You are required.’ The Doctor and Nyssa struggled to no avail, and Nyssa began to think that it was all over and they were about to become Cybermen, but there was a sudden flurry of activity. Two figures appeared from the steps and rushed the Cyberman, colliding with it and barging it

out onto the gantry. It let go of Nyssa and the Doctor, and a voice Nyssa found at once familiar and wonderful shouted, 'Tackle his legs, Frank!'

The Cyberman screeched and wailed and tried to get off its back, but Frank Hartley had managed to get its ankles under his arms. Dad Hartley rushed over and lifted the Cyberman's shoulders. The Cyberman bucked and wriggled. 'I can't hold him!' cried Frank.

'I've got him!' the Doctor said triumphantly as he grabbed the Cyberman's arm and twisted it, leaving the monster locked in a position that drastically reduced its manoeuvrability.

The three lifted together, and Dad Hartley cried out, 'Okay, jug-ears! Over the top you go!' and together they flipped the Cyberman over the rail. It plummeted into one of the vats of nutrient and was hit by the churning pistons. It screamed and gurgled but after a minute disappeared, either drowned in the slime or smashed to pieces. It didn't matter.

Frank went straight to Nyssa. 'Are you hurt?' he asked.

Nyssa shook her head. 'Sore wrist, that's all. Frank, this is the Doctor.'

'We've met,' the Doctor smiled. 'Hello again, Frank.' He nodded to Dad. 'Mr Hartley.' He patted the old man gently on the shoulder and said, 'Nyssa told me about your daughter. I'm truly sorry.' He was.

'We're putting a stop to all this,' Dad said bitterly. 'You in?'

'Absolutely,' the Doctor agreed with enthusiasm.

'So what are we waiting for?' Dad said resolutely. 'Football results?'

'It's the Committee we're after,' the Doctor explained to him. 'Let's go.' And he strode toward the stairs.

Nyssa started after him, but Frank stopped her. 'Nyssa?'

'We should keep up,' she told the boy.

'I just wanted to say...' he hesitated, but he knew how important it was that he did the right thing now, having failed to do so for Yvonne and lost his chance. 'I reckon I was right out of order with you. And I'm sorry.'

Nyssa smiled. 'Frank, I do understand. Yvonne isn't the only good friend I've lost to

the Cybermen. Now come on.' She took Frank's hand and pulled him toward the stairs. As he passed the window he stopped. 'Wait!' he called out. 'Look!'

'I know what's happened to the city, Frank,' Nyssa said sadly.

'No,' Frank insisted, pointing downward out of the window. 'Look down in the courtyard.' Nyssa looked. There were at least three hundred Cybermen gathered in perfect ranks like soldiers on parade. 'There are so many of them,' she gasped. 'A whole army.'

'They're processing everyone,' Frank said, horrified. 'Us too, soon.'

Nyssa wasn't having that. She grabbed Frank's hand and pulled hard this time. 'We must warn the Doctor,' she said urgently. 'Come on!' and she dragged him down the stairs. As they reached the bottom they ran straight into another Cyberman.

'You will come with me,' it ordered. 'Everyone inside the palace is now required for processing.'

Nyssa called out for the Doctor, but knew he would be almost at the Committee chamber by now.

Wine and Cheese

The Doctor and Dad were in the giant geothermal generator chamber. Dad was examining the impressive power systems with amazement. 'I've never seen the like of these generators, Doctor,' he exclaimed. 'You could boil a million kettles all at once!'

'It could propel a whole planet,' added the Doctor. 'Unfortunately, the power's being diverted for other less beneficial purposes.'

Dad looked around at the pipes and cables and wondered if there was anything that could be done about that. 'Any ideas?'

'Several,' the Doctor nodded. 'But we'd have to get past that guard first.' He pointed to the door that led to the Committee chamber. There was a Cyberman on guard. It couldn't see them because the huge pipe they stood

behind obscured its view, but they knew they would have no choice but to break cover at some point, especially if they wanted to carry on with their offensive upon the Committee.

A voice rang out from beyond the door. It was Doctorman Allan, wrangling with the Committee. ‘Why don’t you listen?’ she demanded exasperatedly. ‘Deactivate your feed lines.’ She had been trying for some time now to explain that the nutrient supply had been tampered with.

‘Somebody’s having a bit of a barney,’ Dad Hartley observed.

‘Fighting a losing battle, I’d say,’ the Doctor agreed delightedly.

‘The nutrient’s poisoned!’ Allan screamed at the giant machine. ‘I told you!’

‘No pollutants have been detected,’ the Committee answered. The possibility did not occur to it that it wasn’t registering pollutants because they had already started to affect its faculties. ‘Doctorman Allan, you are no longer required.’ It moved its spotlight from her and let it fall on the massive form of

CyberCommander Zheng. 'Report,' it ordered.

'The surface crew need orders,' Zheng reported.

'I will not be dismissed!' shrieked Allan, but she was ignored.

'Mondas must avoid the nebula,' Zheng continued. 'The surface crew must activate the propulsion system now.'

Allan was still shouting. 'You agreed the processing was restricted to specialised workers!'

'Processing is extended to the full population,' the Committee informed her. 'We must survive.'

'The propulsion system must take precedence,' said Zheng.

'And the city roof!' added Allan. 'Or else we'll all be frozen alive within hours!'

The Committee had heard enough from the raving woman. 'Guards,' it ordered. 'Remove Doctorman Allan.'

Two Cybermen marched forward and grabbed Allan by an arm each. 'What about children?' she screamed. 'Where will they come from? No women, no men! You can't

neuter the whole population!’ She looked to Zheng in desperation. ‘Zheng, can’t you stop this?’

‘All power will be directed to processing,’ ordered the Committee. ‘That is the future. Our future.’

‘There is no future!’ Allan screamed as the Cybermen dragged her away. ‘Only a city of walking dead!’

‘The way of all flesh,’ the Doctor commented, having heard the conversation. He glanced over his shoulder. ‘I wonder where Nyssa’s got to?’

Dad wasn’t listening. He was pondering something, looking at the pipes and cables and tubes with interest. ‘That power,’ he murmured. ‘Going through to the Committee.’

‘Which we have to stop,’ nodded the Doctor.

‘D’you know what it’s like?’ Dad went on, obviously onto something. ‘Alter the energy poles and it could be the biggest cheeser ever!’

‘Cheeser?’ the Doctor repeated the word, but then suddenly got the gist. ‘As in rat trap?’

'Mat trap, Doctor,' Dad corrected him. *'I don't think there's one greedy little Cybermat for miles that could resist.'* He eyed a bank of controls gleefully.

The Doctor heard the sound of booted feet and glanced past the pipe that had been their cover. The guard had left its post, obviously having heard their whispers and come to see who was there. *'I'll distract the guard,'* the Doctor said. *'You get over there and do your worst.'*

'Right,' Dad grinned wickedly and darted for the control bank.

The Doctor sprang from behind the pipe and waved to the Cyberman, calling, *'Hullo! I've come to complain about a leaky roof!'*

'Intruder,' declared the Cyberman.

'That's right,' the Doctor nodded cheerfully as the monster advanced on him. It lunged for him and he danced around the pipe, dodging its blows. *'I have vital information about a threat to the Committee,'* he continued to taunt it. *'But I won't tell you.'* He ducked around the pipe again but tripped this time and the Cyberman's arm caught him across the back. He fell to his knees and the

Cyberman gripped his arms and hauled him up.

‘The CyberPlanner is waiting,’ it said, and marched the Doctor off. The Doctor went willingly, pleased that his distraction had gone according to plan and Dad Hartley had been missed by the guard, left alone to get on with his work.

Dad watched the Doctor go and hoped that he would be all right. Perhaps he would be able to fix this contraption up in time to save the stranger, and Nyssa, and Frank and himself. He hadn’t been able to save Yvonne, but his grief had filled him with fresh resolve to fight the Committee and put an end to its plans. He twiddled more knobs and examined a gauge above the panel. The needle, which had been far over to the right, started to swing back to the left. It was working.

The guard left to escort Allan while the other had gone to carry out other duties shoved her in the back towards the queue outside the processing ward. ‘Don’t push me, you augmented thug,’ Allan spat. She was finally

growing to resent her creations. Godhood it seemed was not all it was cracked up to be.

‘Get in line for processing,’ the Cyberman ordered, shoving her again.

‘So much for a dignified exit,’ she sighed, plodding to join the line. She fell in behind a girl who looked familiar from behind, with that red velvet ensemble and the bouncy brown curls.

Having heard the Doctorman’s voice, Nyssa turned. ‘Dr Allan?’ She was surprised that such a person was suddenly to be processed with the others, even though she knew the Cybermen well enough to be aware that they didn’t really discriminate and anyone would do.

‘You,’ Allan said, equally surprised. She gave a short, cruel laugh. ‘No escape for any of us, is there?’

‘It’s her from the telly,’ a teenage boy who seemed to be keeping the company of this girl but who was, by his pallor and dishevelled appearance, evidently Mondasian exclaimed.

‘What do you want?’ sneered Allan. ‘An autograph?’ She hugged herself against the cold. ‘So where’s the Doctor?’ she asked

Nyssa, assuming she would know. ‘Off on another of his schemes, like the wine?’

‘The Doctor’s trying to save you!’ Nyssa retorted.

‘Oh, do be quiet,’ Allan dismissed her. The boy was staring at Allan. ‘You started this,’ he said, raising his voice. ‘You started all the processing! If it wasn’t for you, my sister...’ His scream cut off his demonstration of anger as a Cyberman observed that he had fallen out of the line and forced him back in with a twist of his arm. ‘My shoulder!’ he screeched.

‘Don’t worry,’ Allan said with a dour smile. ‘Processing irons out all disability and personality.’

‘Shove it!’ growled Frank.

Allan mimed raising a glass. ‘So here’s to oblivion, and the future. It’s all the same from now on.’ She looked ahead, down to the big red doors she knew so well. ‘Come on!’ she called out impatiently. ‘Why’s this queue moving so slowly?’

Dad Hartley was still working desperately at the bank of controls in the generator chamber. He had managed to reverse the output-input polarity but still needed to build power in the resisters. The coils on the two enormous rheostats flanking the main body of the engine were glowing a dull red, but he knew it wouldn't smell quite so delicious to the Cybermats until they were burning bright orange, or even better yellow. He stepped up the capacitor controls and looked for something that might tighten the power feed apertures so that the energy would have to really push hard to get through and there'd be plenty of burn-off. He wanted every Cybermat in the city to be so high on entropy that they had no idea what machinery they were wrecking. 'That's it,' he muttered to himself as he carefully stepped up the power. 'Just edge up a bit more.' He heard a scream and looked up. 'Hang on, Doctor,' he whispered, returning his concentration to the controls. 'Right. Let's give the Mats a treat. Full setting. Number nine.'

He threw all caution to the wind and twisted the dial to maximum. The room was filled with a loud, throbbing hum. The meters' needles went all the way to the left. The pressure gauge flashed danger. The rheostats went bright yellow. Dad looked up and grinned wickedly. This would be his finest hour.

'Stop the processing now!' the Doctor roared at the Committee as Zheng held both his arms behind his back. 'You're destroying yourselves.'

'He has served his purpose,' the Committee declared, now speaking through and functioning as the CyberPlanner. Its voice was slurred and dragging, as though recorded on tape and then played back at a slower setting. 'Dispose... dis... disp... dis-pozzzzzze of him.' The Doctor delighted. It was blind stinking drunk. 'Your faculties are slipping,' he called out to it, tilting his head to speak to Zheng. 'Zheng, use the propulsion system now, or the whole planet dies. Humans, Cybermen – everything!'

‘We arrrrrrre human,’ the CyberPlanner gurgled groggily. ‘Weeee survive azzz Cyber-Huumans.’

The Doctor shook his head. ‘I like humans,’ he argued. ‘But I don’t like you.’

‘We are... stilllll... human,’ the CyberPlanner whined. In the stupefied state of the Committee that was its major component it had not registered the dangerous power build-up in the generators.

‘You abandoned the right to call yourselves human a long time ago,’ the Doctor told it. ‘You’ve gone the whole hog, and you’ll never be human again.’

‘The Doctor’s logic is correct,’ announced Zheng, finally taking a stand against those who had once controlled it and releasing the Doctor’s arms. ‘Processing later.’ It strode to the switch that controlled the powerful super-ion jump warp induction drive and gripped it. ‘The propulsion system must be activated.’

‘Zzzztand away... from zeeeeee... power... junctionzzzzzz...’ slurred the CyberPlanner. Zheng did not obey. ‘The propulsion system must be used now,’ it said. But the beings in the Committee frame, all but Cybermen

themselves, had the bracket weapons at their midribs like Zheng did, and one of them used it. Zheng crumpled to the floor, its chest unit smoking. 'We... must... survive...' it croaked as it burned out.

'We... will... survive,' the CyberPlanner replied.

The Doctor looked up. 'Fat chance!' he spat. 'You were doomed the moment Mondas went out of its orbit.'

The CyberPlanner's voice wavered and swayed, still slow and stunted. 'Mondas...' it said. 'When Mondas's orbit lost stability, our scientists discovered an opposing twin world, hidden until then behind our sun.' The Doctor realised that the wine had made the members of the Committee open up in the same way that one could easily get the truth out of a man in the pub by plying him with drinks until he could no longer keep a secret.

'That's the drink talking,' the Doctor told it. 'Meanwhile, your world's going under.'

Home For Tea

Nyssa was at the head of the queue, with Frank half beside her and half behind her in a kind of joint first place. Doctorman Allan stood behind them both. The recruits were being taken in three at a time. Allan knew this was because there were only three stabilising berths in the Processing Unit, and while they stabilised three freshly-processed recruits another three would be in mid process, another three in induction, and another three in pre-process medical examination. Allan, Frank and Nyssa would be the next three to enter the examination stage. They would be stripped, examined and gowned before being allowed to enter the induction stage. The induction stage was simply the connection of various electrodes and other bits and pieces to

help with the process and the clamping of any broken bones. After that, on the conveyor and through the hole for augmentation, then back out of the hole and into a berth to settle down and adapt to the change before emerging a shining new Cyberman. The big red doors to the Processing Unit were closed. At intervals they were opened from the inside to admit three recruits and then closed again. They were usually closed for about ten minutes, apparently the time it took to strip and examine three recruits. The doors were pulled open again, and the Cyberman that had opened them took Nyssa once again by her sore wrist, pulling her in.

‘Leave Nyssa alone!’ Frank shouted at it. ‘Take me first.’ He stepped forward to allow the Cyberman to take him instead.

‘No, Frank!’ Nyssa pleaded.

‘Don’t resist, Nyssa,’ said Allan stoically. ‘It’s a merciful release. We’ll all go together.’

Nyssa tensed and took a step forward.

There was a sudden crash and a sweep like a wave at sea almost knocked her off her feet. She slammed into the wall, put her hands out to steady herself and looked down. The

corridor was teeming with Cybermats, thousands of them, moving fast, swarming into the processing unit and spilling out everywhere, squeaking loudly. Red eyes flashing. ‘What?’ she gasped.

‘Cybermats!’ Frank exclaimed in amazement. Allan kicked one viciously as it went by. ‘Little vermin,’ she spat.

The Cybermen in the processing unit stopped work. ‘Alert! Alert!’ one of them announced.

The Cybermats clustered on the processing conveyor and then rushed inside the tube, spilling through it as fast as they could. ‘Where are they going?’ asked Nyssa.

‘Stop dithering!’ grunted Allan with disinterest. ‘Get on with the job.’

‘Alert!’ a Cyberman declared again. ‘Defend the CyberPlanner!’ It knew where they were going. They were heading for the generator plant, and most likely the Committee chamber beyond.

The Doctor had decided to listen to the CyberPlanner’s drunken folk tale. ‘Go on,’ he

prompted it. ‘And what happened to Mondas then?’

‘A mooooooon had... had... erupted,’ the CyberPlanner continued with its story, slurring, stammering and struggling to find the right words. ‘From the twinnn... planet’s... sur... surf... suuuurface, unbalancing the... equilibrium.’ The Doctor was impressed that it had managed to get the word “equilibrium” out in one go without a hitch. ‘Mondas... left its orbit... Research showzzzz that the twin... thrivezzzz... while weeee face... an... annan... ann-nan-nan... annihilation.’

Dad Hartley appeared at the Committee chamber door. ‘Doctor!’ he called. ‘The Cybermats are coming!’

‘Processing for all,’ drawled the CyberPlanner. ‘All humans together.’

Suddenly a swarm of Cybermats burst violently into the chamber and started to swarm all over the CyberPlanner machine and the huge Committee frame behind it, locking onto power distribution nodes and sucking the life out of them. ‘You’re under attack!’ the Doctor shouted to the CyberPlanner. ‘Turn off your power.’

‘Assistance,’ the CyberPlanner hummed. ‘Logic walls under assault... Assistance is required.’

The Doctor turned to the switch box where Zheng had been shot earlier. Zheng stood with its hand on the switch that transferred power from the Committee and the processing wards to the propulsion unit. Zheng was damaged, but very much alive. ‘Commander Zheng,’ the Doctor shouted, taking control. ‘Divert the power now!’

Zheng threw the switch. A massive crackle of power spread through the system as all the excess energy that Dad Hartley had bottled up in the generators was channelled directly to the surface. In the distance a march of booted feet could be heard.

‘Where izzzzz... the future?’ asked the CyberPlanner in a daze.

‘You’re destroying it,’ the Doctor answered, looking once again at the Commander. ‘Now’s your chance, Zheng.’

Zheng picked up the telephone on the wall and called the surface. ‘Surface... crew,’ Zheng stammered, much the worse for wear but

holding up admirably. ‘Activate propulsion system on my command.’

How could Cybermen be so formal at a time when action was needed? ‘Zheng!’ the Doctor shouted urgently. ‘Do it *now!*’

Zheng gave the order. The power transfer completed, leaving the Committee chamber with nothing. The CyberPlanner engine shut down, and the screens on the front of the Committee framework flickered out and finally went blank. Burnt out, over-indulged Cybermats started to fall from the machinery, clanging as they hit the floor. The remainder of them continued to suckle from the Committee, draining every last drop of energy from it. The members’ chest units spluttered and gave out, and the withered faces seemed to instantly decompose, the technology surrounding them having been the only thing that had prevented its happening any sooner. The Committee was dead.

Outside in space, Mondas performed a perfect U-turn, pulling itself clear of the influence of the huge red glowing nebula. Then the massive ion transducer jets in a ring like a

crown worn by one hemisphere flared and the entire planet jumped into hyperspace, population and all.

In the Committee chamber, the Doctor and Dad Hartley stood alone amidst the debris that had once been the Committee framework. After a good hammering from the Cybermats it had broken up and collapsed into pieces. All of the Cybermats had finally burnt out and lay upturned or on their sides, dead from overfilled bellies. A haze of smoke hung in the air and the Doctor looked down at the wreckage. 'It's gone,' he said quietly and with an air of finality. 'Back to the dust it fed on.'

He and Dad turned and walked away.

It wasn't long before the Doctor found himself back at the TARDIS, but he didn't go in. He sat glumly in the Square, looking up at the tops of huge cranes borrowed from the surface, the work there done now anyway, where men and women and Cybermen worked together, patching the cracks in the city roof. There was still snow everywhere,

though teams of Cybermen with flame-throwers were crawling all over the city and blasting it off the streets. Things that could be damaged by such blasting were dug out with shovels and the snow disposed of. A horse-drawn van clattered around too, offering hot soup to the citizens. Nyssa stepped out of the TARDIS and looked down at the Doctor. ‘Don’t sit out here in the cold,’ she said kindly.

‘Why not?’ asked the Doctor. He was just being rude because he felt sulky. ‘It helps me think.’ This hadn’t really gone the way that he’d wanted it to, and he knew no matter how chummy they all looked now that the Cybermen would eventually turn on the rest of the Mondasians and finish the processing job they’d already started. But he had learned a lot from this adventure, and there had been a few small but important victories.

Nyssa handed him a sheet of paper. ‘I’ve worked out those projections.’

The Doctor took the sheet and looked at it. He had asked Nyssa to plot Mondas’s new course. ‘Let’s see,’ he mused with interest.

‘You were right,’ said Nyssa. ‘Mondas is now moving on a reverse trajectory, away from the Cherrybowl nebula.’

‘It’s on its return journey,’ the Doctor said, remembering the very first time he had ever met the Cybermen, on Earth in 1986, and recalling something one of them had said. ‘Back home from the edge of space.’ It occurred to him that the person who would one day be Cyberleader Krail was certainly here, perhaps only a few feet from him.

‘Hardly that far,’ Nyssa smiled, wondering why he phrased it quite that way.

The Doctor shrugged. ‘Star charts are relative, you know. Like Time.’ He sighed heavily and passed the paper back. ‘Too many dead. And it didn’t help Adric, did it?’

Nyssa shoved the paper into her pocket. ‘Did it help you?’

‘Or you, Nyssa?’

‘Maybe. It depends how much has changed.’

‘The Cybermen would’ve happened sooner or later. The nebula was just a good excuse.’

‘At least we got rid of the Committee,’ Nyssa said with some satisfaction. ‘And Zheng, too, even if the other Cybermen are still here.’

The Doctor stood up. 'Maybe they'll turn out as instruments for good after all,' he suggested, not really believing for a second that they would. 'If they and the humans can learn to live together.'

'They certainly have a good pedigree,' Nyssa smirked, making light of the Doctor's contribution now that the crisis as such was over.

The Doctor gave her an odd look. 'Is that meant to be flattering?'

'It is,' Nyssa smiled with a single short nod.

'Well,' the Doctor sniffed. 'Perhaps there is something to be said for breeding. And they are doing a good job on the city roof.' He pointed upwards to where Cybermen crawled upside-down on the roof like spiders, traction pads on their wrists and knees, carrying huge metal tubes that squirted a dense, quick-hardening sealant into the deep cracks. 'No human could do that.'

'It's already warming up,' Nyssa said cheerfully.

A Cyberman trudged over to them. 'Doctor,' it said.

The Doctor looked quizzically at it. 'Is that you, Thomas Dodd? You really should wear labels, you know.' He turned back to Nyssa. 'Tragic waste. The old, unprocessed Thomas, the one I couldn't trust, he was infinitely preferable.'

'My programming does not encompass deceit, Doctor,' said the Cyberman. 'You are requested to supervise the construction work.' The Doctor shook his head. 'Ah, no, Thomas. That's very kind, but we should be going.' He started to backpedal toward the TARDIS.

At that moment, Dad Hartley appeared with Frank at his side. 'Going?' he hooted. 'You can't go, Doctor! We need you. There's plans to lay and burst pipes to mend.'

'Sounds like pure drudgery,' the Doctor grinned. 'I'm sure you can cope.'

'The Doctor prefers to deal with the grand scheme rather than the day-to-day details,' Nyssa joked just a tiny bit critically.

'Told you, Dad,' said Frank. 'Take no notice, Doctor. He'll do it brilliantly himself.'

'I'm sure,' agreed the Doctor. Dad Hartley looked sad. 'It's... it's all for Yvonne, you know,' he said quietly.

The Doctor nodded. ‘Yes, I know. And that’s the best possible reason. Where’s Doctorman Allan?’

‘Working,’ said Dad. ‘She reckons that with your notes,’ he nodded to Nyssa, ‘she can reverse at least some of the processing. Make them a bit less...’ He searched for a word.

‘A bit more human,’ the Doctor inferred as to his meaning.

Dad smiled. ‘Less horrible, I’d say.’ The word wasn’t perfect, but it was good enough.

‘That’s a decision for all of you,’ the Doctor advised. ‘At least she’s closed down the processing lines.’

The church bell started to peal. ‘The bell at the Church of Former Day Souls,’ the Cyberman observed from its history programming.

‘Cheerier this time, Thomas,’ the Doctor smiled. ‘Ringin’ for the future.’ He knew that the Mondasians’ future remained bleak but wasn’t about to spoil their moment of respite. ‘Whatever that brings.’ He turned and walked to the TARDIS, where he waited at the door for Nyssa.

Nyssa was saying her goodbyes. ‘Frank,’ she said, passing him a small object that she had in her hand. ‘I thought you’d like this.’

Frank took it. It was a small square tin, enamelled in black with a pattern of dark green leaves. The shape of the leaves was familiar, but Frank couldn’t place it. ‘What is it?’ he asked.

‘A box of tea leaves,’ Nyssa told him with a kind smile. ‘I found it in the TARDIS.’

Standing by the TARDIS door and watching Nyssa, the Doctor felt his cheeks flushing. ‘Er, Nyssa...’ he called, skipping up to rejoin the group.

But Nyssa was too busy with the Hartleys to notice. Frank held up the tin to his father. ‘Look, Dad!’

Dad looked at the box. *He* knew the shape of the leaves instantly. ‘Tea!’ he exclaimed delightedly, his face lighting up. He nudged his son jovially. ‘I thought the Doctor was going to give us the bill.’

‘Now there’s a thought,’ the Doctor huffed.

‘Doctor, be nice,’ Nyssa chided him. She wondered why he was being so ungracious.

‘Nice?’ the Doctor echoed, as if he failed to comprehend the word’s meaning.

‘That’s grand, Nyssa,’ grinned Dad, taking the tin from Frank and admiring it. ‘Thank you. Both of you.’

‘Come on, Dad,’ smiled Frank. ‘Time for a brew.’ And they walked off together.

The Doctor was scowling. ‘Time to go, I think,’ he grunted at Nyssa. ‘Goodbye everyone!’ he called curtly and strode back to the TARDIS. ‘Come along, Nyssa.’

‘But Doctor,’ Nyssa protested, at a loss to explain his rudeness. He didn’t answer, so she called her goodbyes to the few who could hear and joined him at the TARDIS door.

‘That tea was a gift from Emperor Ieyasu of Nippon,’ the Doctor said gruffly as he inserted the key and held the door open for Nyssa. ‘I’ve been saving it.’

Nyssa groaned as she stepped inside. So that was it.

Epilogue

Back in her office in what had once been the Committee palace, which citizens were now starting to call the Government Building, their plans of a democracy well in hand, Doctorman Allan sat at her computer, typing up Nyssa's notes on stem cell culture. Sisterman Constant was in the office with her, checking through some files. 'You're very quiet, Sisterman,' Allan observed after almost an hour of silence. 'They had used to talk so often, though it was mostly disagreements about Allan's drinking. 'You haven't even looked at these notes on stem cells and processing reversal.'

'A more logical proposition,' said the Cyberman that had once been Constant, 'would be an increase in processing, Doctorman.'

Allan shook her head and groaned. 'Oh no. We're not going to go through all that again. The Doctor was right. We've got a different future now. A future he has given us.' She looked at the Cyberman, trying in vain to read the eyes of Constant, lost somewhere beneath the mask. The Cyberman seemed to be staring at her as if sizing her up. 'Constant, what's the matter?' Allan asked. 'Why are you looking at me like that?'

The door of the office opened and another Cyberman entered. It was bigger than most and marked out from the others as a senior in rank by a black cranial cap and black flashes on its cranial tubes and shoulder plates. Allan gawked. 'B-but you were destroyed...' she breathed.

'Doctorman Allan,' announced Zheng. 'We begin again.' It reached out its hands, splayed its fingers and pressed their tips to her temples. Doctorman Allan came over dizzy and blacked out.

Mondas hurtled on through space, its heading the exact reverse of the course that had brought it to the nebula.

The way back to Earth.

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I'd like to dedicate this book to my father, without whom I'd have absolutely no relationship with Doctor Who. As *Spare Parts* itself suggests, everyone needs a good Dad.

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